RadioTimes

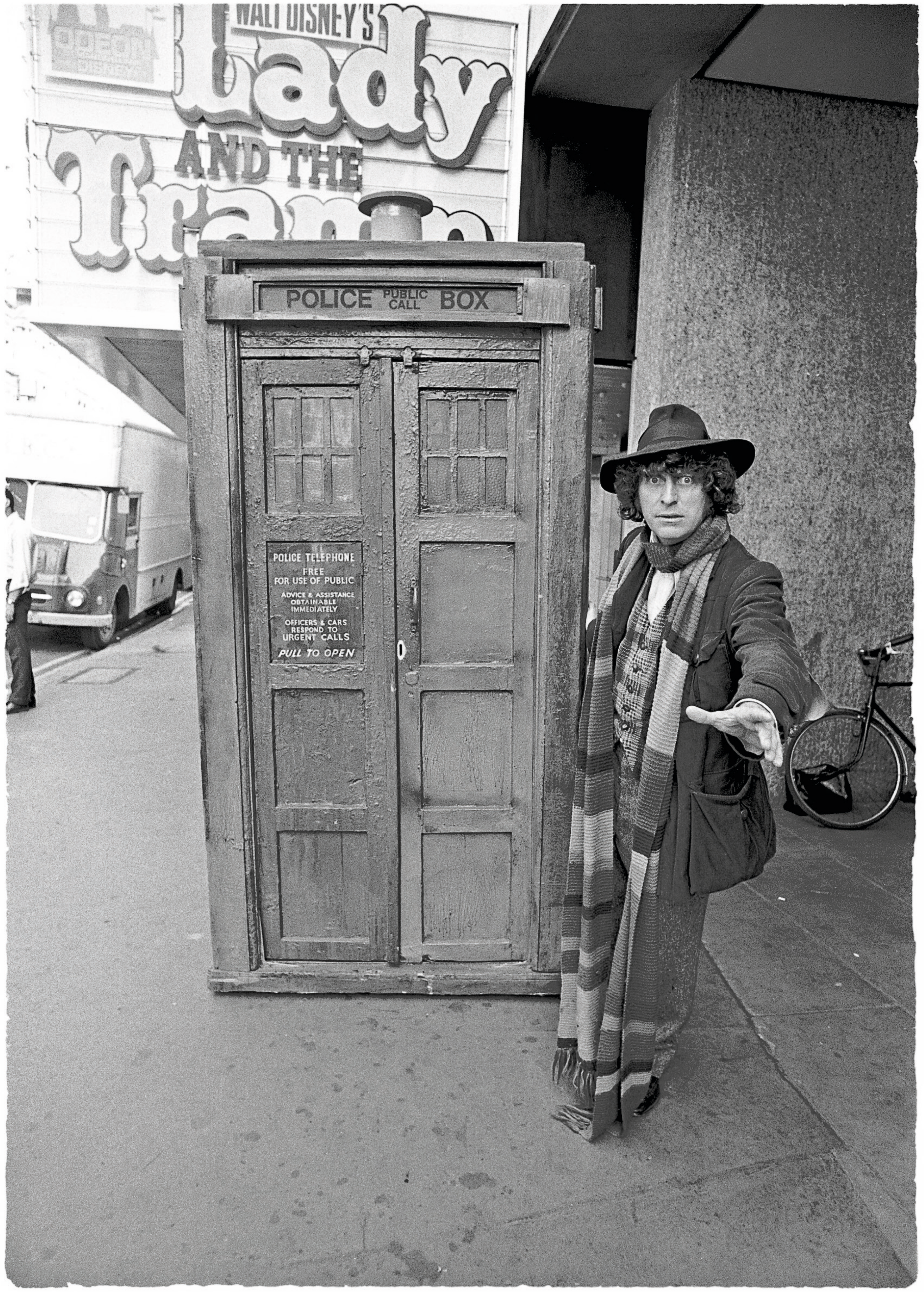
TOM BAKER

50 YEARS IN TIME AND SPACE

CLASSIC FEATURES ILLUSTRATED WITH RARE ARCHIVE PHOTOS

THE GREATEST DOCTOR WHO EVER IN HIS OWN WORDS

RadioTimes DIGITAL SPECIAL


WALT DISNEY'S
Lady
AND THE
Tramp
POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX
POLICE TELEPHONE
FREE
FOR USE OF PUBLIC
ADVICE & ASSISTANCE OBTAINABLE IMMEDIATELY
OFFICERS & CARS RESPOND TO URGENT CALLS
PULL TO OPEN

▲ Tom Baker photographed by Chris Ridley on St Martin's Lane, London; 3 August 1975. The actor paid a visit to the cinema to film links as the Doctor for BBC1's *Disney Time*

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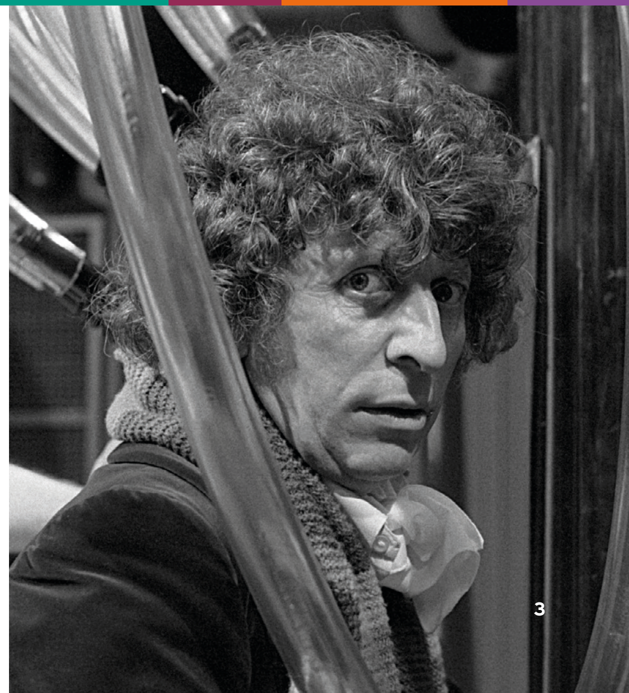
CLASSIC FEATURES AND
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM
THE PAGES OF

RadioTimes



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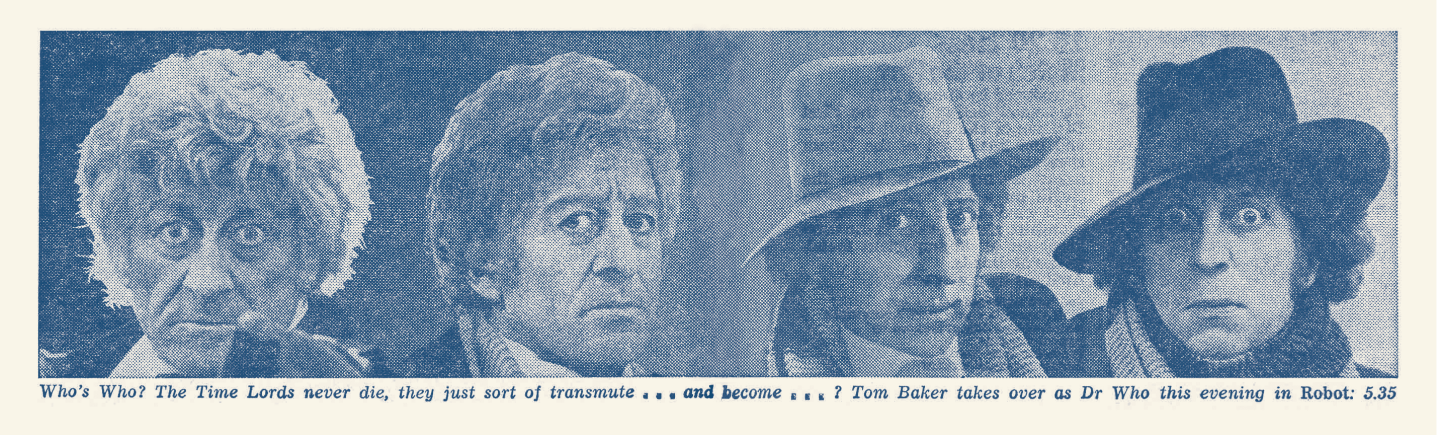
ON THE COVER
Tom Baker photographed for *Radio Times* by Allan Ballard in 1975.

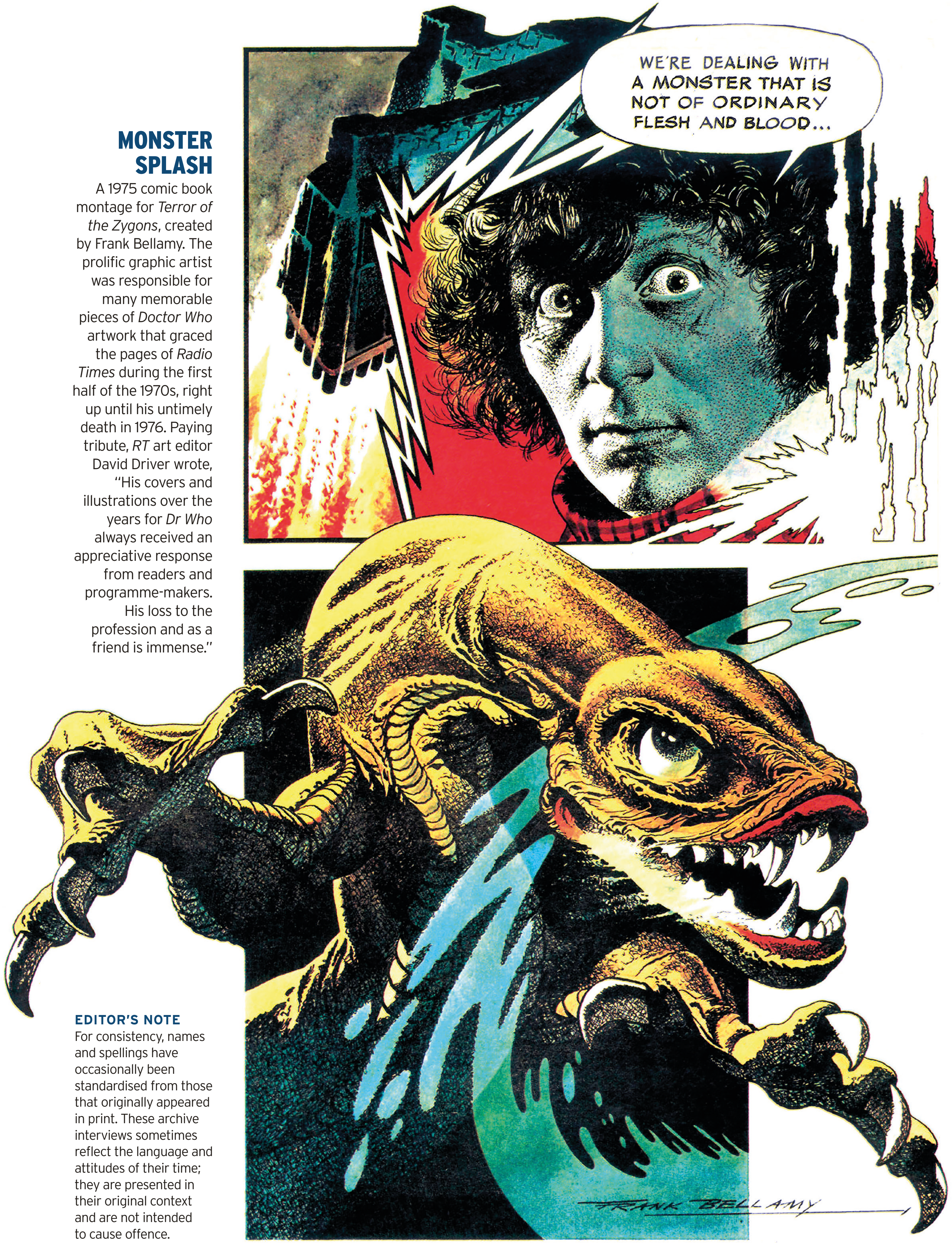
▼ 50 years on... *RT* previews Tom Baker's *Doctor Who* debut on 28 December 1974



Who's Who? The Time Lords never die, they just sort of transmute . . . and become . . . ? Tom Baker takes over as Dr Who this evening in Robot: 5.35

MONSTER SPLASH

A 1975 comic book montage for *Terror of the Zygons*, created by Frank Bellamy. The prolific graphic artist was responsible for many memorable pieces of *Doctor Who* artwork that graced the pages of *Radio Times* during the first half of the 1970s, right up until his untimely death in 1976. Paying tribute, *RT* art editor David Driver wrote, "His covers and illustrations over the years for *Dr Who* always received an appreciative response from readers and programme-makers. His loss to the profession and as a friend is immense."


WE'RE DEALING WITH A MONSTER THAT IS NOT OF ORDINARY FLESH AND BLOOD...
FRANK BELLAMY

EDITOR'S NOTE
For consistency, names and spellings have occasionally been standardised from those that originally appeared in print. These archive interviews sometimes reflect the language and attitudes of their time; they are presented in their original context and are not intended to cause offence.

1

8 MARCH 1975

MASTERS OF THE MEAN MACHINES

Those incorrigible Daleks are back in the new serial *Genesis of the Daleks*. Their creator, Terry Nation, and Tom Baker, the fourth Dr Who, held their first conversation together in the company of writer Anthony Haden-Guest

EX-TER-MIN-ATE! "Ex-ter-min-ate!" the Daleks reiterate, happily. They are chuntering down a corridor with a welter of chukka-chukka noises and that clumsy, baleful glide of theirs, and the person they are gliding after is – as usual – that Saturday superhero, Dr Who. What is less usual is that the Daleks are naked. Which is to say that they are not wearing their knobbed carapaces, but floppy sweaters, suede shoes, stuff like that. One of them is shooting up bystanders with a ballpoint pen and another is making circling gestures with his palm, a bit reminiscent of a Dalek conning tower and a bit like a Papal benediction.

Tom Baker – Dr Who the Fourth – is looped up in a corner, studying the script, while somebody from Costumes is clucking around looking for his scarf. Elisabeth Sladen, who plays the Doctor's space-time Girl Friday, is curled into a dentist's chair which leaks stuffing.

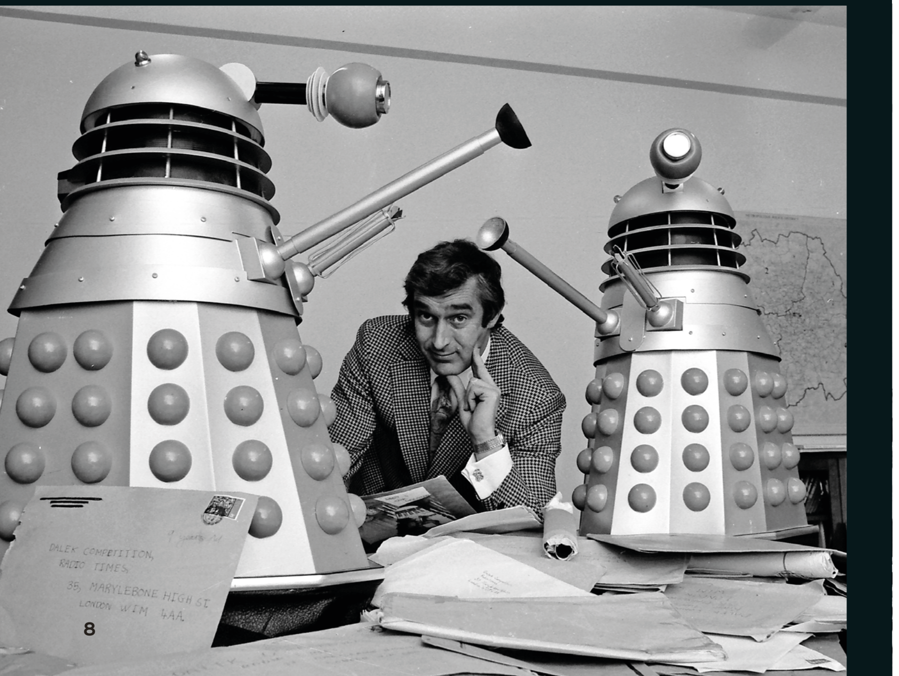
The Daleks grind to a halt. There are only three of them, despite appearances – "Clever editing," the chief Dalek says, with pride. We are in the BBC rehearsal rooms, Acton, London. Dismantled Dalek husks are standing by a wall. They are a bit poky inside, with yellow foam rubber seats.

Terry Nation, Tom Baker and I are at dinner. It was, of course, Terry Nation who wrote that first Dalek adventure, and many since – including this. He is an animated man, with short grey hair and a billowy great shirt of frilled brown silk. "I *adore* science fiction," he is explaining. "If I have rocks talking, it's because I *made* them talk. And if anybody objects, I just say: this is my island, pal!"

Tom Baker disassembles a bread roll with energy. He has fistfuls of brown hair which seem to have burst from his cranium through sheer

◀ Tom Baker and writer Terry Nation photographed by Allan Ballard in 1975

"I WAS CARRYING A HOD ON A BUILDING SITE WHEN I GOT THE PART"



brute force, and he has one of those mobile faces which seem to be always working. He is wearing a baggy jacket of pale brown cord, all that's left of the suit which Michael Jayston gave him while they were making *Nicholas and Alexandra*. "It's from Hollywood," he says, eyes goggling. It was Baker who earned plaudits as Rasputin. Since he took over as Dr Who, viewing figures have swollen from around nine to a peak of 13.5 million.

Nation doesn't pretend he knew he had a winner with the Daleks. "In fact, I never dreamed it would last." Nor did certain others at the BBC, who had wanted something different. "A *Time Tunnel*-type thing, you know, educational…"

That would have been disastrous, agrees Baker. "The thing about Dr Who, is he must be eternally in the present. Like when you fall in love." Fall in love? "You know, that wonderful sense of surprise."

And how can one maintain that? "That's easy. They might have combed Europe before finding another middle-aged ten-year-old like me." Baker actually believes all those things that the Doctor stands up for, "Like loyalty and kindness. I'm not one of those knockers. They're even knocking" – a shocked pause – "*The Wind in the Willows*."

Aren't there problems in being the leading Nice Guy in Televisionland? "A group of Wrens in Plymouth wrote once to ask why the Doctor wasn't more human," Terry Nation says. He explained that Dr Who *wasn't* human, and the Wrens apologised.

Yes, Baker agrees, It sometimes happens to him even. I mean, there he is lost in space with these scrumptious birds, and all. "I explain that I'm not a man," Tom Baker says, "I'm a Time Lord."

IT COULD, OF course, be a bit constricting in one's private life. It wouldn't help to get involved in some weird scandal, but Baker says that he isn't really the scandal-prone type. And he really likes the spin-offs – going around children's homes, that sort of thing. His success has been both sudden and recent: "I was carrying a hod on a building site when I got the part."

And now? "I was gimbolling along to Jerry's one evening [this being a tavern much favoured by the acting profession] and I am walking between two coppers, and one says, absolutely on cue, 'Good evening, Doctor!' I was delighted! And then *they* were delighted that I was

▲ Michael Wisher (top left) as Dalek creator Davros in *Genesis of the Daleks* (1975)

◀ In 1972, Terry Nation paid a visit to the *RT* offices in Marylebone to judge a reader competition to win one of two "Mark 7" Daleks

▲ An intense Tom Baker captured in studio by photographer Don Smith during *Genesis of the Daleks*

delighted." He fiddles with his jacket. A pink toothbrush is protruding from his pocket. Right now, he is living in a lorry drivers' pull-up in Shepherd's Bush. His belongings are in a couple of cardboard crates in a BBC production office. It's a lifestyle that reminds one of, well, Dr Who.

IF THE DOCTOR seems eternal, the Daleks seem no less so. Nation killed them off once, but like Sherlock Holmes and the Frankenstein monster they wouldn't stay down. Indeed, he feels the Daleks may have gotten too big for their tin boots. The suggestion is not entirely serious. Terry Nation owns 50 per cent of the Daleks. "A manufacturer approached me the other day to talk about Dalek-shaped *ice cream*."

Nation is responsible for what a Dalek actually is. This, incidentally, was originally rather vague. Controversy even spilled over into the correspondence columns of *The Times*. A Dalek is not, repeat not, a robot. Robots are machines created (usually) by humans: Daleks are machine-beings and nasty with it – the body of a liquidiser on wheels, plus the mind of a liquidator.

Anyway, if the Doctor, to some extent, needs the Daleks, the Daleks certainly need the Doctor. And how does Tom Baker bring off the tricky feat of co-starring with a tin cylinder (or for that matter, when occasion demands, an outsize fruit fly or a glob of pullulating green jelly)? "I always try to give them their point of view. I remember a London copper trying to nick me for talking to a tree." He amplifies, amiably, "A plane tree."

"The Daleks depend on your reaction to them," says Nation, zealously.

"That's fundamental to an actor. My response to a Dalek has got to be totally real. Or else," Baker waves, "it doesn't exist."

"If he ever treated them with disrespect, they'd be dead," Nation says. But why exactly are these murderous machines so popular" It is, agrees Nation, bizarre. "Here are these terrible creatures that just want to kill everybody. And people love them."

"Everybody needs villains," says Baker.

"They're Indians, Sydney Greenstreets, income-tax men," says Nation, adding more seriously, "it's good versus evil. Do you know what we have here? A new-style morality play!"

"They're terrible!" agrees Baker, joyously. "No humour, no jokes. And without jokes, there's no optimism." He leans forward, gobbling with outrage: Dr Who, ready for the Spaceways, the Timewarps and what Evil may befall. Tremble, Daleks! Tremble in your tracks!

TOM BAKER IN NUMBERS

DOCTOR NUMBER **4**
YEARS **1974–1981**
STORIES **41**
EPISODES **172**

4 SEPTEMBER 1976

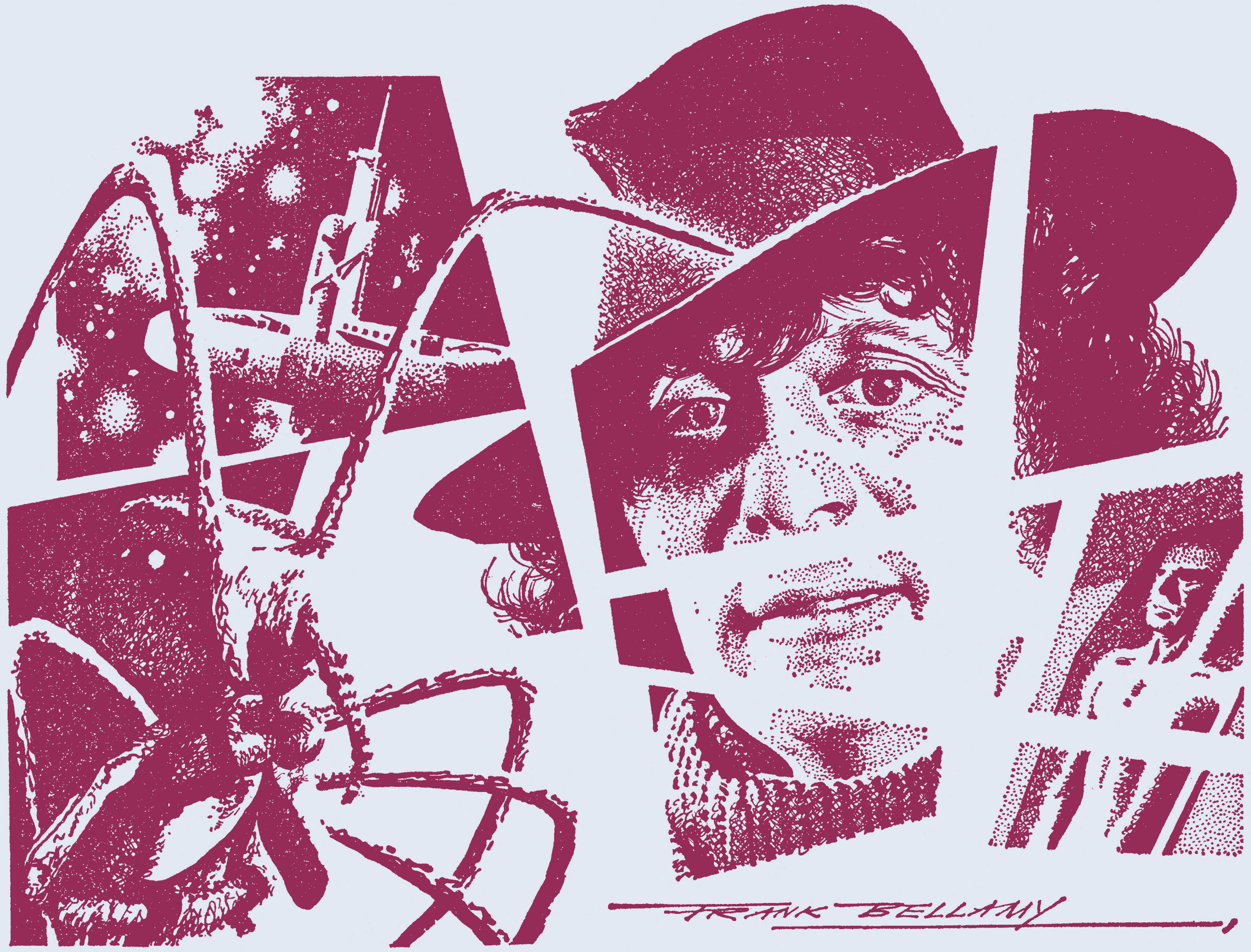
OUR TRADITIONAL MONSTERS, says Philip Hinchcliffe, producer of the new *Dr Who* series, now entering its 13th year on BBC television, have become a bit outdated. He believes there are still more fanciful monsters to be summoned up. "There is a growing taste for science fantasy and romance," he says, "and I believe we should try to meet it. Our audiences range from five- to 90-year-olds and we have to be careful not to lose credence with our older viewers." So, over the last couple of years, Hinchcliffe has put the Daleks into mothballs, along with the Cybermen and the Ice Warriors. Doubtless, they will stage a comeback: "But, for now, I'd like to try something different."

Another innovation: "The Tardis has a new control room. It's always been explained that the ship is infinitely bigger inside than it appears from the outside and the Doctor reveals the new quarters by opening a forgotten door apparently at random. It's rather dusty and Edwardian inside. But we invited members of the *Dr Who* Appreciation Society to inspect the controls and I'm assured they're in good working order."

He has also received a ten-page thesis from a viewer, now living in Rhodesia, which formulates an ingenious theory as to how the Tardis makes its journeys through time and space. "Viewers are increasingly sophisticated," says Philip Hinchcliffe, "and that's an excellent thing. Part of the fun lies in keeping up with them."

THE DOCTOR'S RENAISSANCE

RT spoke to producer Philip Hinchcliffe in 1976 when *Doctor Who* was riding high



ILLUSTRATIONS: FRANK BELLAMY

2

NOVEMBER 1983

LIFE BEYOND THE TARDIS

Tom Baker left *Doctor Who* in 1981, returning to life as a jobbing actor. Gay Search caught up with him in 1983 for a special *RT* publication marking the show's 20th anniversary

Tom Baker, the longest-serving Doctor to date, had no idea when he took the part that it would change his life. "I can't tell you how dreary it was being Tom Baker! During those seven years, the part licensed me to behave in private life in a unique way – I was one of the few men in Britain to whom 'Don't talk to strange men' didn't apply. The sweet, trusting, instant intimacy I had with children was wonderful.

"If I was in a restaurant, I might hear a parent saying to a small child, 'George, do behave!' After a while I'd catch his eye and say, 'Hello George! Haven't I seen you watching me on television?' He'd say, 'Yes' and I'd say, 'George, I wonder... could I have your autograph?'

"My hearing improved no end during those years. You can't say 'I beg your pardon' to a child more than once because the pleasure turns to embarrassment. You know, it was really very easy. All I had to do was be still and benevolent. The rest all happened in the child's imagination. If I'd started to do conjuring tricks or singing, that would have been simply showing off!"

His fans were by no means all of school age. In America in the last year or two, he has acquired a huge and devoted adult following, and when he was having a drink in a London club one day, a High Court judge raised his glass and said, "My dear Doctor! How nice to have you with us!"

When Tom accepted the part, he didn't know how he was going to play it. "I dreaded them asking me that question, and in fact, I never did know. If my performance did have a certain air of

◀ Tom Baker in 1977 at the height of his success, pictured with Louise Jameson as companion Leela and trusty robot dog K9

“WHEN WE ENCOUNTERED A NEW MONSTER, I COULDN’T BE FRIGHTENED. I’D SAY, ‘HELLO? WHAT ARE YOU?’”

spontaneity, it was because I really didn’t know what was happening a lot of the time! I think that helped with the alien, otherworldly quality.”

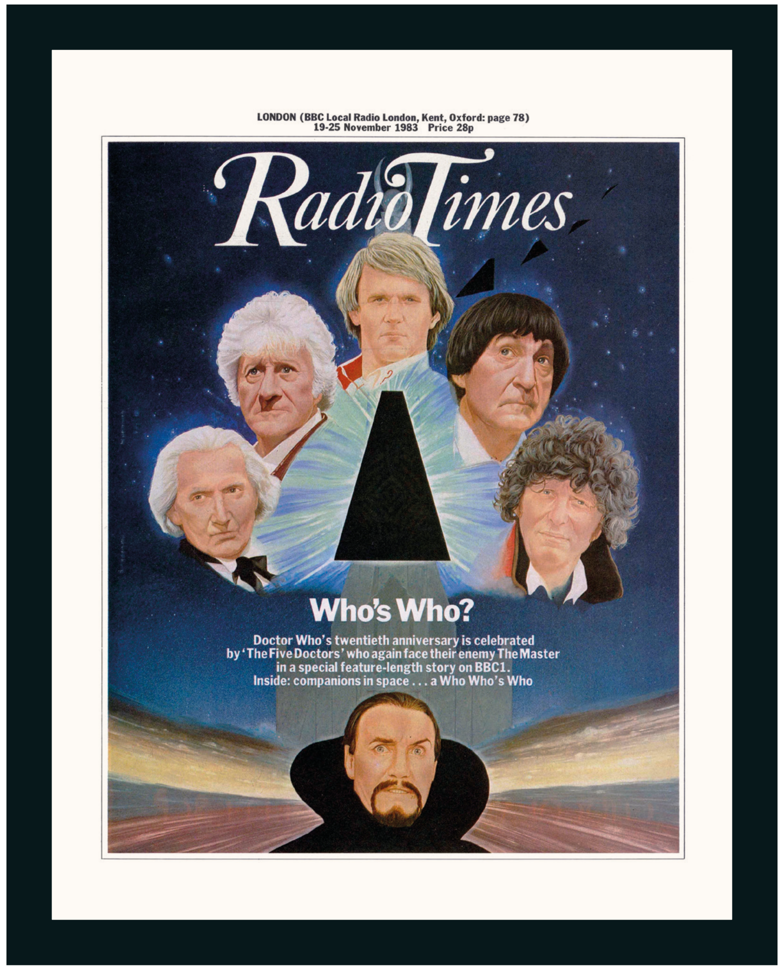
What his Doctor did have, he hopes, was a certain childlike quality, a genuine curiosity about everything and anything, and in spite of being more than 700 years old, the capacity for being constantly surprised. “When we encountered a new monster, I couldn’t be frightened. I’d say, ‘Hello? What are you?’ It would then knock me out, or something and when I finally came round I’d say, ‘Romana, we’ve got to watch out for *him*!’ My aim was for the Doctor to be in a state of celebration about whatever was going on, and that included danger.”

What became the trademark of Tom’s Doctor – the very long scarf – happened by accident. “The costume designer [future Oscar winner James Acheson] chose the colours very carefully, and took the wool to a marvellous lady called Begonia Pope to be knitted. She got so carried away that she used every scrap of wool he had given her, and so the scarf wound up being 20 feet long. Pure serendipity; I love serendipity!”

TOM THINKS IT rather odd that in all his travels round the universe and back and forth in time, no one ever commented on his rather bizarre outfit. “It would have been nice to have someone amazed at the way I was dressed, or so impressed by my helping them that they all dressed up like me. I could have had an army all dressed like me, and I could have drilled them – all tripping over their scarves…!”

He would have liked to have had more historical adventures, meeting real people and arguing the toss with them. “It would have been very interesting for the Doctor to have met Izaak Walton and talked about fishing, or Isaac Newton and talked about gravity! He could have told him he’d got it all wrong, and proved it, but it would have been so far outside Newton’s experience that he would have had him thrown out by the servants!”

After seven years as the Doctor, Tom feels that he may have outstayed his welcome. “But I was fascinated as an actor by how to be constantly surprising and inventive in essentially predictable situations – the Doctor is always on the side of the good and he must always win in the end. And of course, I just adored doing it. It is a unique and magical experience to be able to live out a public fantasy on a gigantic scale *and* get paid!”



LONDON (BBC Local Radio London, Kent, Oxford: page 78)
19-25 November 1983 Price 28p

RadioTimes

Who’s Who?

Doctor Who’s twentieth anniversary is celebrated by ‘The Five Doctors’ who again face their enemy The Master in a special feature-length story on BBC1.
Inside: companions in space . . . a Who Who’s Who

FRONT-PAGE (TIME) SCOOP

In 1983, Tom Baker’s Doctor finally graced the cover of *Radio Times*, painted by Andrew Skilleter for the 20th anniversary special *The Five Doctors*. But where was Tom’s cover during his original run? David Driver, *RT*’s art editor during that time, told *Doctor Who Magazine*, “We were subject at *Radio Times* to programme controllers saying, ‘We don’t want you to feature *Doctor Who* and so on.’ I’d try to fight that sort of thing, but sometimes people wilted under pressure. An editor might have felt, ‘Everybody knows about *Doctor Who*. People are still going to watch it whether it’s on the front or not.’ That was not, and is not, my view.” Driver added, “I think I’d worn their patience thin with my enthusiasm.”

▶ Tom signing autographs at the 1983 20th anniversary event held at Longleat House, photographed by Don Smith

▲ *The Silver Chair*: Tom Baker as Puddleglum, Camilla Power as Jill Pole and David Thwaites as Eustace Scrubb, photographed by Chris Ridley

1990 A LAND OF MAKE-BELIEVE

Nine years after *Doctor Who*, Tom Baker returned to teatime TV fantasy in 1990 when he starred in *The Silver Chair*, the BBC's final serial in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Tom played Puddleglum the Marsh-wiggle, a morose, web-fingered amphibian.

The make-up and exotic hairstyle meant a two-and-a-half-hour make-up session. "I was in the make-up chair by 6.00am," he told *RT*. "It was hot and heavy to wear, and at the end of the day, getting it all off took 40 minutes." However, he enjoyed the experience. "On the last day, I could scarcely bring myself to say goodbye to David and Camilla," he said of his young co-stars.

The Silver Chair came after a self-confessed lean period. "It baffles me why I can't earn a regular living as an actor," he said. "I may go for an audition, but the director will say: 'He doesn't look like a policeman, he's Doctor Who.' "

Yet Tom was sanguine about his typecasting. "Certainly, underacting has never been my forte. A director once said: 'Tom, you couldn't walk through a door convincingly.' He was probably right. I have only ever wanted to walk through a door interestingly."

▲ Divine discontent for Puddleglum, captured in a series of Chris Ridley portraits

▶ Electric dreams: Tom Baker and Douglas Adams pose on the vast studio set created for *Hyperland*. Photographs by Chris Ridley

...AND POINTING TO THE FUTURE

Tom Baker embraced future visions once again for Douglas Adams's *Hyperland*, which reunited the fourth Doctor actor with the script editor of some of his most freewheeling adventures.

Adams's 1990 "fantasy documentary" explored emerging communication technology, predicting the development of today's internet. Tom Baker gave voice – and face – to the machine: "Now he becomes an interface: a piece of computer software to take viewers into the 21st century," explained *RT* to readers. "This imaginative programme comes from Douglas Adams, who wrote *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. He takes viewers into the futurescape of interactive television, a part of a three-dimensional video projection. Baker acts as the guide to Adams's vision, playing a multitude of roles from a fish to a businessman."

3

30 JULY 1994

‘I CAN BARELY GET THROUGH A SHAVE, LET ALONE SEE MYSELF ON TELEVISION’

Tom Baker preferred *Doctor Who* to being a doctor in *Medics*. He tells Andrew Duncan why he likes avoiding the real world

Eccentrics are rare in these timid times, so they should be cherished, even if they do proclaim in advance how difficult they are. “I rarely work twice for anyone and I’m never invited back anywhere. Why is it?” asks Tom Baker. “I don’t understand. I wash harder than ever, send my gear to be cleaned, but I know I’m ridiculous. That’s why I’m an actor. I see myself as a professional diverter, taking people away from the horrors of the world. I can scarcely bring myself to watch the news these days.”

Before we “divert”, let’s try to discuss *Medics*, in which he stars as surgeon Geoffrey Hoyt, but he is continuing: “I don’t like real life because I don’t understand it and I’m no good at it. Most people want fantasy, but keep their desire under control. I can’t escape entirely but my wife [Sue Jerrard, a TV director] understands my anxieties and doesn’t let much impinge on me. I’m never so real as when I’m entirely fictional, and never so insecure as when I have to be real, which is why

▶ Tom Baker photographed by Jamie Hughes at Longleat House in August 1996

▲ Tom Baker meeting a new generation of fans at Longleat House in 1996. Inset: Striking a pose on the set of *Pyramids of Mars* (1975)

> **"DOCTOR WHO WAS THE MOST WONDERFUL PART. I WAS A MADMAN TO GIVE IT UP"**

▲ The Doctor and Romana (Mary Tamm) tend to a stricken K9 in *The Stones of Blood* (1978)

I'm garrulous and try to amuse. Self-delusion gets us through life. I'll invent things if I can't think what to say."

Conversation with him is a captivating series of non sequiturs and progresses at a stately pace with a few friendly insults and bits of advice on the way. He smiles and, apropos of nothing in particular, imparts some unsolicited information. "The best place for fellas of our age [he is 61, I am not] to get picked up is the London School of Archaeology. Those young crumpet adore old men, the more frazzled and grizzled the better. Sometimes I loiter with the hope of being mistaken for Jonathan Miller. Anything can happen then. "Do you know Jeremy Irons? He's a wonderful cure for insomnia. He wears fantastically beautiful clothes and would've been a great star in the silent movies. It's just when he speaks he's done for. Mind you, most of us are. We should keep quiet, if we can. I read about others and think, 'My God, do I sound like that?' Is it true that people who write profiles are misanthropes? Why is anyone interviewed by these harpies who do hatchet jobs on fellas? They seem to hate men."

Medics... "Ah yes. This is the third series. I've also done *The Russia House* and Priestley's *Lost Empires* on the wireless. I love the wireless. The pay is terrible, but it's so much more immediate – no make-up and you don't have to wear costumes – as well as an excuse to be childlike. I adore stepping into a cat litter tray to make the sound of gravel. One is never disappointed listening to radio, whereas watching television one almost always is. People look so plain, speak badly, are ashamed of their own language, and have no apparent convictions.

"I don't have any convictions, but I can pretend I have, with terrific conviction. And viewers are distracted by one's thyroid condition or whether you're wearing a suit that reminds them of Uncle Willy. My mother always remarked, 'Our Monica used to have a frock like that.' Actors think television is enormously powerful, but viewers don't really care. I haven't watched anything through since the Six-Day War. You don't have to. A 50-minute programme comes on and within five minutes you've got it."

Medics... "And I'm looking forward to *Arsenic and Old Lace* on the wireless. It's about two intensely religious ladies who poison old men with wonderful whisky spiked with arsenic. Fortunately, they have a big cellar and a brother who thinks he's Teddy Roosevelt – that's me – and who buries the bodies. People adore serial murderers. Anyone can do a one-off. I see passengers on the train who terrorise their wives reading *Great Poisoners of Our Time*, but the only ones we know about are the incompetents who were discovered. There must be successful ones lurking. What intrigues me about you is you could be on your 19th murder and you're inviting me to lunch in order to get me somewhere so I can be your 20th victim."

FUNNILY ENOUGH, I say, I've always been a bit suspicious of him, living as he does next to a graveyard in a Kent village, lovingly tending the grass. "I like the dead. They're so uncritical." He has bought his own tombstone, but before he dies he imagines he'll have a period in the gutter. "A lot of inadequates have a desire to end up there and I'm infatuated with failure. I treat beggars very well. I came out of a religious bookshop the other day and one said to me, 'So you're a believer?' I shrugged winsomely, and he continued, 'Have you noticed how faith banishes fear and embarrassment? Could you let me have the price of a ticket to Bristol?' 'Beautifully put,' I replied and gave him all I had. I like to think I'm chosen by the beggars, except so many of them now turn out to be journalists researching documentaries for Channel 4."

He pauses for a second. "Journalists are a pretty repulsive lot, as bad as actors. At least you should have the expertise to give people the impression you're genuinely interested in them, instead of wanting to rip them off, which is the fact of the matter. I had to talk on the phone to some girl from *What's on TV*. God, she was dull. Do you realise that this interview could be sold for $25 a tape to the *Doctor Who* Society in America? They have conventions and I go among them and lay on hands. Middle-aged ladies stick their tongues in my ear under the pretext of listening. The odd thing is that after the age of 47 chunky little females have tongues like shrapnel. It makes me slightly deaf. A blessing in disguise in our business."

All right. I give in. Let's discuss *Doctor Who*, which he starred in from 1974 to 1981. "It was the most wonderful part I ever had and I was a madman to give it up. I got proprietorial and became demanding and insecure. I talk emphatically about everything because I know very little

▶ A prickly character by the time of 1980's *Meglos*, part of Tom Baker's last season of *Doctor Who*

about anything. I never meant to be difficult, but I began to live in the world of the Doctor, this benevolent alien, and thought no one understood me and I'd had enough. But of course I hadn't. I could have gone on for ever. I've never really recovered. They wouldn't give me the film [at the time rumoured as being developed by Steven Spielberg], would they? They won't know how to do it. Popular films are tawdry, about images and not about thinking."

TO RETURN TO *Medics*... "I'm pretty successful in the sense that people know me, but I'd like the applause to be louder. I wanted to be a star, not just an actor, so I thought I'd start by becoming a saint. At 15, I joined a monastery – anything to relieve the boredom of being at home, ashamed of one's parents. The house was dirty because my mother was out cleaning other people's homes. Now I'm ashamed of that attitude. She loved me unconditionally but gave me rather upsetting advice – 'Tell the truth, keep your bowels open, say your prayers, know your place and always polish your shoes.' My parents [his father was a sailor] didn't speak to each other for nine years. I remember the melodrama, which I liked."

Baker stayed for six years in the monastery. "I was terribly close to Him but ended up a martyr to my lust, following my erection, which I called Arnold. I was besotted with my fellow celibates but there was no chance to score. Celibacy induces a kind of madness, but once you have the illness called love, you become a victim. You suffer." A few years later, when he was 26, he married his first wife Anna, daughter of gardening expert Harry Wheatcroft, and they had two sons, now in their 30s, who he doesn't see. "They remind me of their mother, and therefore a failure, but I don't think they can have any bad thoughts about me. Like all dodgers of reality I'm full of self-justification, but I've done my best. I'm sure I've disappointed most people and certainly my life is packed with failure.

"When I was young I only wanted to be loved. Now I'm into adoration tinged with worship and luckily I have a wife who adores me. The wonderful thing about marriage is you don't have to speak to each other. Good marriages are to do with mind reading and having separate bathrooms. I loved my sons terribly when they were little, but why do I have to go on loving anyone? I stopped loving God, for God's sake. That was a big effort. Sometimes he calls me up. I get these jangling noises in my head – 'Isn't it time we got back together?' Well, we won't. Not unless he offers me a very good part. Have you noticed how vicars don't believe in God? I'm thinking of writing a soap opera about one who does."

Before that, how about *Medics*? "They asked me back for my second series [he wasn't in the first], which is amazing. However, they changed the producer and directors. The only person who survived was my dresser. The thing is that when you're really inadequate – and I don't want to labour this, you've got to be able to enjoy any old s**t."

Presumably we have moved on from *Medics* now. "The work may be terrible, or it may be a small part, but like all alchemists you have to make something out of nothing or something better out of something OK. I only have a very tiny gift – as anyone who has worked with me will tell you – but I do have the capacity to enjoy. I would enjoy washing up in the kitchen here, for a while. People adore tales of woe, much more than comedy. It's terrific to watch others suffering. *Casualty* is the street accident and everyone running. In *Medics*, we're more... well, I only read my bits of the script, and I don't watch it. My God, I can barely get through a shave, let alone see myself on television. Everyone likes the idea of being a doctor. Looking after the sick gives you such a wonderful sense of power. Patients are so grateful and do what they're told – or else. It's amazing to be able to do a little test on someone and then mutter, 'Oh, dear...' I'd like power, cor yes. I'd abuse it and make people uneasy, particularly those who try to tell me what to do."

He works intermittently on an autobiography, [eventually published in 1997] called *All Friends Betrayed* "...starting with God. Actually, I don't have friends – I'm a real actor – but my wife has lots and when they come to the house I love serving them. There's something terribly abject about actors and our need to be adored. I'm no good without attention. When I die, I'd like people to say, 'He did his best. He bought the drinks and gave a generous performance.'"

HOME BAKE
HOME BAKE

▼ Daily bread. Tom Baker photographed by Caroline Mardon for *My Kind of Day*

1993 A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BAKER

Tom Baker was a subject for *RT*'s lifestyle feature *My Kind of Day*. "Being an actor makes your day extremely exhausting if you're not working," he told Rupert Smith. "I'm constantly thinking up little dramas to pass the time, because without them the days can be tedious. I occasionally give up drink, just to be dramatic."

When not fretting about his lack of work, Tom began with a morning grocery shop. "I buy a lot of spinach; it's my lunch with a crust of bread when my wife goes out. I would like to be a vegetarian, for aesthetic reasons; there's no doubt that vegetarians enjoy their bowel movements much more than carnivores."

Shopping done, Tom decamped to a nearby pub with his Kent locals until lunchtime. "If my wife's at home, I whizz back and make her lunch, then she retreats and carries on working. But now it's 2pm and the demons are back because I've had three pints and maybe a glass of wine, so I pop out to the churchyard that adjoins our house and check on my gravestone. The wife will come out of her office at 4pm for a cup of tea, and we might begin the *Times* crossword, although we usually save that to annihilate at dinner time."

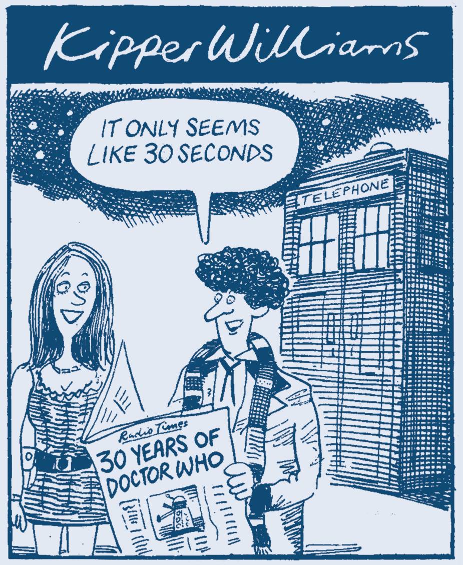
Signing off, he favoured an early night, "I like to be in bed by about 8.20pm; I'm seeking oblivion as early as possible."

ITV • C4 • BBC TV & RADIO • SATELLITE
Radio Times
SOUTH
20 – 26 November 1993 65p
LOOK WHO'S BACK
IN 3D
What force for good could bring the Doctor back to TV on his 30th anniversary?
Children in Need!
DON'T MISS IT, FRIDAY BBC1

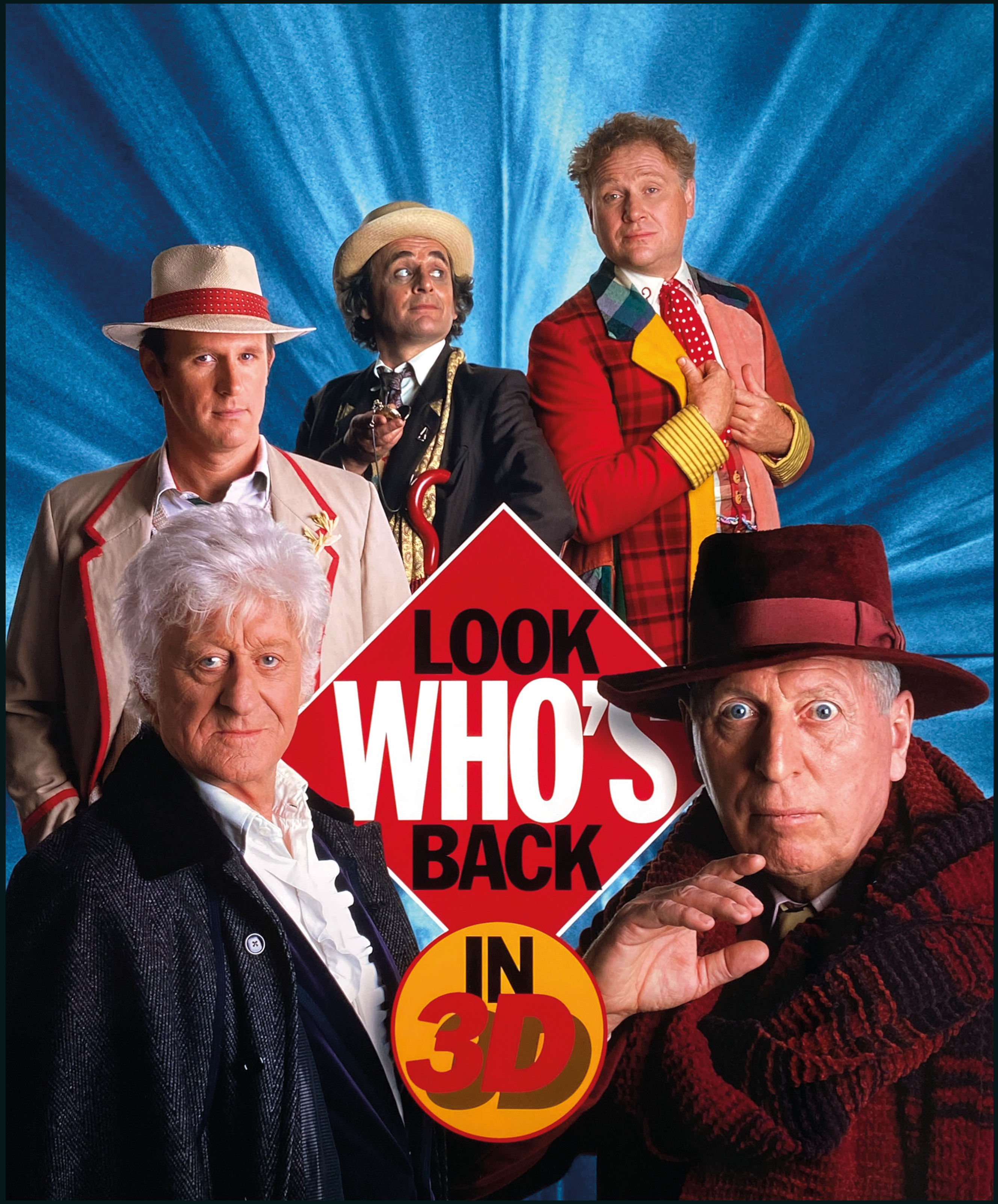
...AND BACK TO TIME AND SPACE

Doctor Who had ended in 1989, but that didn't stop the show from celebrating its 30th anniversary in grand style. 1993's Children in Need event gathered all five surviving Doctors for *Dimensions in Time*, a spectacular mini-adventure produced in 3D, which included Kate O'Mara, a jumble sale of old monsters and a trip to *EastEnders*' Albert Square, with a detour to the *Cutty Sark*.

As with *The Five Doctors* before, Tom Baker kept his distance from his fellow Doctors, restricting his contribution to a brief video message: "Good luck, my dears."


Kipper Williams
IT ONLY SEEMS LIKE 30 SECONDS
TELEPHONE
Radio Times
30 YEARS OF DOCTOR WHO

▲ An anniversary cartoon by *RT* regular Kipper Williams


LOOK
WHO'S
BACK
IN
3D

▲ *RT* featured *Dimensions in TIme* on its 20 November 1993 cover, specially photographed by Mark Harrison and assembled as a large-format digital transparency. The accompanying feature remembered Tom Baker's fourth Doctor as "enigmatic, mysterious and profoundly witty – an intellectual in a floppy hat and that famous scarf".

4

13 NOVEMBER 1999

TOMFOOLERY

As the fourth Doctor, Tom Baker made the most popular house calls of them all.

Andrew Collins takes his current temperature

You wouldn't think that five minutes would matter much to a Time Lord, but on greeting Tom Baker in the lobby of a London hotel, his first utterance is a headmasterly, "You're late." No jelly babies are proffered. Suitably shamed, I ponder the irony of this ticking-off – isn't this the scatty, wild-haired incarnation of Doctor Who whose Tardis would often arrive late by a matter of centuries, and invariably in the wrong galaxy?

The answer, of course, is no. This is Tom Baker, 65-year-old thespian, not Doctor Who, 750-year-old Time Lord. It's easy to confuse the two: during his seven-year, 178-episode reign as the Doctor (1974-81), Baker became synonymous with the character. The longest-serving Who and easily the most popular (the series peaked at 19 million viewers in 1979), Baker's snake-like scarf, floppy hat, long coat, boggly eyes and bag of sweets are fixed in people's minds as the definitive features of this amorphous English icon.

In the flesh, Tom Baker looks reassuringly Doctor-like ("all teeth and curls," as Jon Pertwee put it in the 20th-anniversary episode *The Five Doctors*). An imposing 6ft 2in, wrapped in a scarf and overcoat, his resonant baritone and garrulous manner would have anyone of a certain age convinced that they were taking tea with a time traveller – until, that is, he starts laying into BBC newsreader Huw Edwards, apropos of nothing.

"I don't know why he's on the BBC," he rails, mischievously. "He negates the news. What's the point of a fellow having a haircut which gets in the way of the news? Anyway, enough about Huw Edwards!"

Enough indeed. Far from reluctant to mull over a 20-year-old TV programme, Baker relishes it. "It's always pleasant to recall a long-ago success," he booms. "Though it's never really gone away. It gives me a certain amount of pleasure to recall the only great success I've ever had."

A harsh assessment, but Baker is nothing if not realistic. Being chosen to replace Jon Pertwee as the Doctor in 1974 was the best thing that ever happened to him. After some theatre and the odd film (the BBC had spotted him in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*), he was working on a building site when the call came. "I was getting a lot of laughs on the site," he grins, "but it wasn't leading anywhere – except to another building site. When I got the *Doctor Who* job I was very glad, but I didn't know what it meant at the time.

79p 13–19 November 1999 www.radiotimes.com
RadioTimes
Look Who's back on Saturday night
David Jason on the courage of All the King's Men
Alan Hansen on Scotland v England

▲ Tom was interviewed for 1999's *Doctor Who Night* on BBC2, which *RT* marked with a special silver-stamped cover shot by Lord Snowdon.

“NOTHING WAS AS JOLLY AS DOCTOR WHO AND NOTHING WILL EVER BE”

▲ Hanging around on set for 1978’s *The Pirate Planet*, written by Douglas Adams

“I started on a modest amount of money – though it seemed like a lot to me – but it wasn’t just the money I wanted, it was the glory. *Doctor Who* was on in 93 countries – in America alone, it was on more than 240 stations. The programme’s still loved today, and I’m still loved… The other day I was asked to resume my career as Doctor Who for audio books. I don’t think I’ll do it. Best leave it as it is. Moving pictures confer a kind of immortality, and that’s one of the wonderful things about being an actor: you live for ever. We are now in a time where the living are entertained largely by the dead.

“For seven years *Doctor Who* was my whole life, but it wasn’t hard. It’s not hard being a children’s hero, it’s a great pleasure!” Does he have any idea why *Doctor Who* was – and remains – so popular? “I haven’t got any idea and it would be reckless to pry into that,” he says. “It’s much better to leave all that to other people. I didn’t know what was going on. I didn’t read the scripts very carefully because I didn’t think it was my business to read other people’s parts, but the important thing when you’re an entertainer – or a newsreader – is that people listen to you, and switch on to watch you. People watched in their millions. If that’s what they like, don’t pry, just do it!”

BAKER IS INVITED to attend countless *Doctor Who* conventions around the world, but accedes only rarely (“I’m nervous of disappointing the fans – I’m just so ordinary really”), and in 1983 he was conspicuous by his absence in *The Five Doctors*, shown as part of Children in Need (they used footage from an unbroadcast old episode). However, he welcomes the continued interest. “The fans want to know everything about *Doctor Who*, he explains. “They want to know the names of my cats, and what’s my favourite flower – they’re shocked when I say it’s deadly nightshade!”

For an actor who suffered such a marked lean period in the years immediately after *Doctor Who*, Baker is all grace and no bitterness. “Anyone can cope with being in demand and loved, and with people pursuing you, giving you presents and kissing you,” he explains. “It’s indifference that’s very hard to cope with.”

Though the typecasting cloud has still not entirely lifted (“The producers and casting directors today saw me as Doctor Who as kids”), on the day of our interview Baker is playing God in the Radio 4 play *Take Two* (“I like the speed of radio, you can do *Lear* in a week”) and is currently Crummles in the new version of *Nicholas Nickleby*. He also has a part in the imminent Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer remake of *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)*.

A far cry from his days battling Davros and the Wirrn, Tom Baker’s life is now closer to his pre-Doctor “luvvie years”, working under Laurence Olivier at the National. “I knew him quite well socially,” Baker recounts, before striding off (half an hour late) to his next meeting. “I’d go to his parties with all of that crowd, and very jolly it was, too – but nothing was as jolly as *Doctor Who* and nothing ever will be.”

FORTY FOUR

22 NOVEMBER 2003 As *Doctor Who* turned 40, *RT* readers voted Tom Baker the greatest Doctor ever in an online poll. The great man joined us for a photoshoot and chat to celebrate

NEW DOCTOR WHO

"There's no point bringing *Doctor Who* back exactly as it was. They do have to move on and make it funny and wry. Will there be sexual chemistry between the Doctor and his companion? Will they make the Doctor gay? Black? Or a woman? Eddie Izzard would be a wonderful Doctor. He's so mysterious and strange, but at the same time benevolent. He's also a comic genius who works with very little material, and that helps."

LARKING AROUND

"After working on a building site, filming *Doctor Who* was fine. It might've been long days in a gravel pit but you're with a pretty girl, earning very good money and larking around. When we had visitors on the set, John Leeson would be in the scanner wagon to do the voice of K9 and I'd be outside doing a crossword with the dog next to me and he'd say, 'Do you need some help, master?' There are out-takes that they couldn't possibly show of me kicking K9 and telling him to f*** off. I'm just an old comic really."

A TIME LORD MUSICAL

"My favourite moment in *Doctor Who* was when I resolved the whole problem of the existence of the Daleks and I was about to blow them up. I had two pieces of wire and all I had to do was put them together and I said, 'But have I the right?' It was the end of the episode, but really it should have been the cue for a song, like in *Pennies from Heaven*."

THE FANS

"I think it was Glenda Jackson who said to me, 'My son asked me, can't you get into something interesting like *Doctor Who*?' Even 20 years on, the Doctor's image has stayed with me. I don't find it any more irritating to be asked about *Doctor Who* than Geoff Hurst does to be asked about scoring a hat-trick in the World Cup final. It was my moment of glory and because of the potency of television, it's never gone away."

THE FUTURE

"I won't ever be the Doctor again, but if they did bring back the Tardis, they could have me in a glass case, just moving my eyes and watching what's going on. When the new Doctor is thinking things out, he could turn to it and say, 'What would you do, I wonder?' "

BEST FOR TV | BEST FOR RADIO | BEST FOR FILMS

RadioTimes

Special anniversary cover: 3 of 4

22–28 NOVEMBER 2003
www.radiotimes.com 88p

Tom Baker
Doctor Who
1974–1981

JERRY HALL "Beneath this peroxide lies a smart brunette"

JFK: How his death changed the news for ever

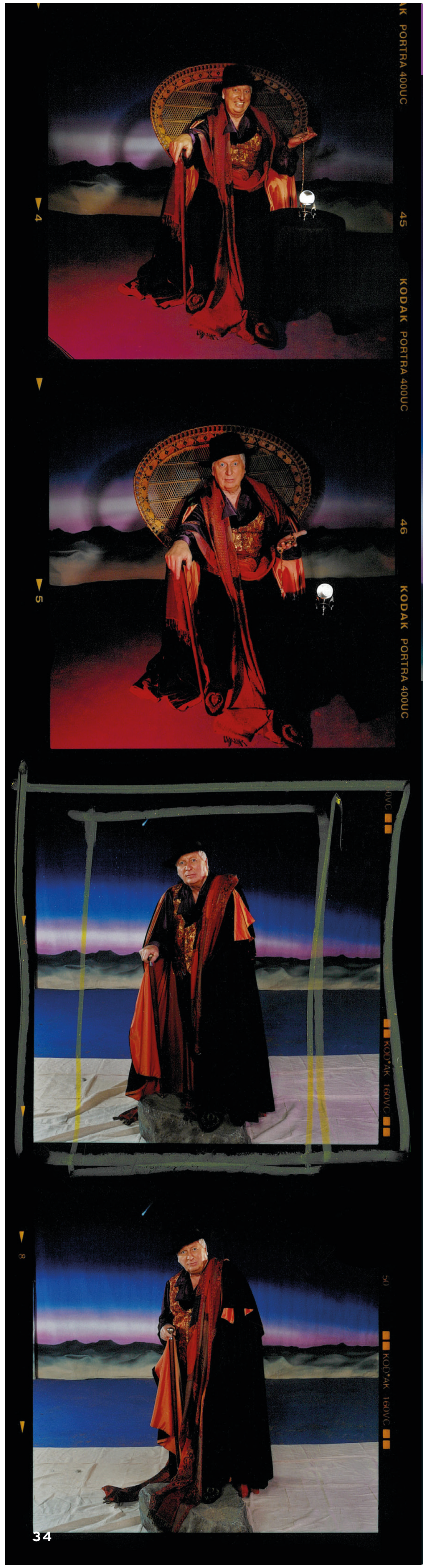
EXCLUSIVE
40TH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL

Doctor WHO

Including: Win-a-Dalek competition… never-seen-before photos… and your choice for the next Doctor!

Collect all four commemorative covers and line them up to create a special Radio Times tribute to Doctor Who

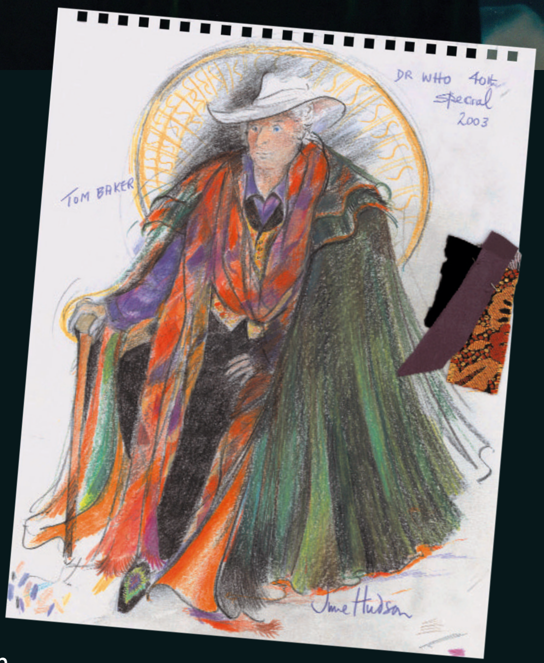
◀ Tom Baker photographed by Andy Earl for *RT*'s 40th anniversary issue. The four covers connected to make a single vista image

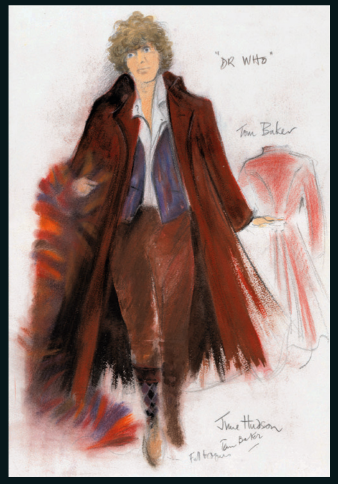


JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

For the 40th-anniversary pictures, Tom Baker wore a new outfit specially created by June Hudson, the costume designer who styled him for *Doctor Who* over 40 years ago. "I wanted to use the same rich colours of the original costume I designed for Tom," said Hudson. "It's a question of evolution. Tom's stature on *Doctor Who* has matured and come to fruition and I've introduced an autumnal feel to reflect that."

Hudson was called in to re-style Baker's Doctor back in 1980. "His outfit had got scruffy and I felt he needed a costume as striking as he is. I used a very rich deep plum and kept the long scarf because I didn't want to sacrifice any part of the Doctor's image. In the same way the new costume is another step forward," she explained.





▶ June Hudson's sketches for Tom's 40th-anniversary costume and her 1980 redesign

GALACTIC GLAMOUR

When *RT* first spoke to *Doctor Who* costume designer June Hudson

1 SEPTEMBER 1979

June Hudson says "*Dr Who* is a costume designer's dream." Not only has she designed half the programmes in the new series, she has worked on everything from *The Onedin Line* to *Blake's 7*. *Dr Who* has the great attraction of all science fiction – freedom to work from imagination rather than just having to get period details right – "though," she says, "you have to know the past in order to design the future."

Dressed in a black smock with a gold sash around her waist, white culottes and black tights, she looks like a seasoned interstellar traveller herself, and her own clothes reflect her view that science fiction clothes should be simple and striking – in her designs she tends to keep to black, white, grey and perhaps the occasional dash of red.

In the new series, Lalla Ward takes over from Mary Tamm as Romana. "Lalla is very different from Mary," June Hudson says, "she's young and girlish whereas Mary was cool and elegant and remote, so I've designed playful, witty clothes for her. I've given her a pink copy, a take-off, of Dr Who's clothes – even with her own long scarf, but made of silk." In fact, to make the monsters seem more monstrous, Dr Who and Romana are deliberately made to look the least "spacey" characters in the programme. Their clothes are kept to a familiar style, usually reflecting the actors' own tastes.

Aliens and monsters present more of a challenge; and her ideas come from some unusual sources. The Movellans – the Daleks' rivals in the new series – came to her in a dream. "I did a sketch the next morning, and the director, who has a taste for Cubism, also liked it. He promised me beautiful-looking actors... that's important because the danger is that you design a shape, not a costume, and then you get a short fat actor and it looks terrible!"

BUS STOP
REQUEST
12
260
187
BBC

▶ June Hudson shows off her designs for the Doctor, Romana and a Movellan at a bus stop by the BBC rehearsal block in Acton

Designing science-fiction costumes is, she says, "a matter of using familiar objects in unfamiliar ways", and often, at least in her case, the material itself is the inspiration for the costume.

She also systematically investigates likely sources for new ideas. With as many as 50 costumes to design for each *Dr Who* adventure, and a budget that allows no more than £80 to £100 per costume – "People forget that includes everything, boots and helmets, the lot" – she has to find suitable ready-made clothes as often as possible. "I ring up people like the Electricity Board to find out about new safety helmets, and the Atomic Energy people send me details of new radiation-proof suits." A recent Health and Safety exhibition in Brighton was a treasure-house of new ideas – a plastic stick containing fluorescent chemicals, normally used for emergency lighting in mines, found its way onto the Movellan costume.

The Movellans had to seem slightly mechanical, and though her design had the right look, she had no idea what to make the costumes from. "I wanted something fairly rigid, something like paper sculpture, but I couldn't think of anything. Science-fiction costumes are more often made by prop-makers than dressmakers, and the man who makes many of my costumes suggested that I use quilted, foam-backed nylon – like they use inside cars and in ski clothes. It worked perfectly." **ANWER BATI**

5

18 SEPTEMBER 2004

WHO'S COMING TO GLENBOGLE

Chrissy lley tries to get the truth out of Tom Baker about his mischievous role in *Monarch of the Glen* – but who will have the last laugh?

BEST FOR TV | BEST FOR RADIO | BEST FOR FILMS
RadioTimes
18–24 SEPTEMBER 2004
www.radiotimes.com 90p

RETURN OF THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE…
So why the 25-year-delay?

KIM AND AGGIE
are back – and this time it's personal hygiene

BORIS JOHNSON
"Am I going to be in trouble?"

DEADWOOD
"The best TV western since 1989"

RT EXCLUSIVE
Who's in Glenbogle!
We meet Tom Baker as he prepares to join the cast of Monarch of the Glen

▲ Tom photographed on location in the Scottish Highlands by Mark Harrison

The hills of Glenbogle are alive with the boom of Tom Baker. It seems even the grass vibrates in his presence. I've been in the mansion at the heart of *Monarch of the Glen*, inspecting the old photographs of the late Hector MacDonald, and you can hear him round the comer. Baker, that is. In Susan Hampshire's trailer, by the lake. If you don't think you hear him, you hear people talking about him. You feel the space where he might just have been. There's even a copy of his autobiography, *Who on Earth Is Tom Baker?*, in the production office. I suspect he might have left it there himself because everybody else clearly knows who he is.

The ruggedly handsome Lloyd Owen (who plays Paul, now in charge at Glenbogle since the departure of Archie) describes Baker as "a joy to work with and in the best tradition of an English eccentric. You can't take him on."

It doesn't appear to be a challenge to the cast of *Monarch of the Glen* that the wildest and most loveable multicoloured-scarf-wearing Time Lord has landed to bring a little bit of friction to the gentle Sunday evening series. His witty acting is a joy to them. Typecasting's not a problem. "He's so accomplished as an actor," says Hampshire. "So clever."

Martin Compston (who plays Ewan) wasn't even born when Baker played Doctor Who between 1974 and 1981, yet they have a surprising and very real rapport. On screen, they are the characters who bring each other out, both a little wayward, naughty, out of control. Off screen, too, it's a fascination of the old and the young, although Baker is always saying he's very, very old. He is, of course, endearingly silly.

He's joined the cast of *Monarch of the Glen* to play Donald MacDonald, Hector's brother – a racing driver banished 40 years ago and now has been forced to return. There are lots of skeletons in lots of closets. There's tension, issues and a gradual repair that's sometimes moving and sometimes amusing. The off-screen character is the one that's less easy to pin down, however.

Tom at the Tardis controls with *Doctor Who* co-star Lalla Ward, whom he later married

He has said before, “I’m never so real as when I’m entirely fictional and never so insecure as when I have to be real.” That seems to be his mantra, and there isn’t a single person – from cast to crew – on set who isn’t fascinated to find out who the real Tom Baker is. Where does it start, where does it stop, and how thin is the line?

He loves a tall tale. He loves to bring you in, lead you on, let you down. He does it almost obsessively. Owen says, “He sells his stories fantastically, but I can spot them now. Usually a slight non sequitur. He’ll see a chink to say something that doesn’t quite relate and you know when he starts a sentence with ‘I once knew a man who was paralysed from his thorax…’ But I’ve nearly always fallen for them. He’ll take you right to the punchline.”

Compston concurs. “I’ve heard him setting people up. He’ll do it to you because it’s always when he first meets someone. He’ll tell people these crazy stories and they don’t know whether to believe him. They don’t want to not be polite but they think, is he telling the truth here? He enjoys telling people about how he learnt to swim via a correspondence course. He learnt the high dive on a piano stool. He passed his course but nearly drowned when it came to his practical… He loves to perform.”

Armed with Compton’s detailed instructions, I brace myself to meet the booming big man face to face. And what a face it is. Enormous teeth, very beady eyes. He’s looking slightly peeved that I’ve been warned about his storytelling. He doesn’t like the idea that his means of communication might have been tampered with. The amazing thing is that he can amuse, offend and terrify with such charm.

Now he’s feeling bad that Hampshire fell for the swimming by correspondence yarn. “Susan gives you the benefit of the doubt. I saw her thinking, ‘Is that possible?’ But then real life is all about tall stories, isn’t it? Politics, journalism, everything. I wouldn’t dream of telling anyone the truth and I wouldn’t dream of telling anyone a malicious lie either. If there’s a danger that they might believe it, I just enlarge it so that they know it’s not true. Otherwise, there’s no point in telling the story, is there? I just find as I get older, my desire to spin a yarn or make people laugh has become more important. My real autobiography would be fascinating. I haven’t been able to write that yet because it would be unfair and I wanted to spare other people.”

THE SIMPLE FACTS of his life say it all. Liverpool childhood, poor and dirty. His mother Mary Jane cleaned other people’s houses. His father was a sailor. He entered a monastery at 15, left after a few years as he couldn’t hack the celibacy, and lost God. National Service (during which he first started acting) was followed by a spell in the Merchant Navy and then drama college. Married his first wife, Anna Wheatcroft, who came from a well-to-do family who despised him. Had two boys, “loved them so much my knees shook”, got divorced, hardly saw them again. Attempted murder of mother-in-law, attempted suicide, worked on building site, got *Doctor Who*, married co-star Lalla Ward (who played Time Lady Romana), divorced after a few months, and much later on married Sue Jerrard, who had been an assistant director on the series.

“I USED TO WANT TO BE LIKED. THEN I WANTED TO BE LOVED… FINALLY, I WANTED TO BE ADORED”

He has always been an outsider, though, never quite comfortable in his own skin, which perhaps is why he says, “My first ambition was to be an orphan.” Although he explains it as orphans in the war got lots of presents from America and he didn’t, you get the impression he really believes it. He talks in monologues that are circuitous and random and occasionally pithy and poetic. Whenever you think he might be a little vulnerable, he’ll say something like, “I’m just a jolly bloke. I want to make people laugh. I want to please them.” He brings Hampshire a paper every morning and makes Compston lots of tea. His energy is so ceaseless that when he went to visit a school where the children sang in Gaelic, he decided to learn the language. He’s researched tartan and knows the history of the house, probably more fluently than its owners.

Of his *Monarch* character, Donald MacDonald, he says, “He’s come from the past. When he comes back, he finds everyone is an alien. Some of them are benevolent, but it still feels like he’s come from another planet. But although the heroic aspect of Doctor Who is not there, there’s a kind of similarity.”

He’s adored by many as an icon, but you get the impression that he never really understands why. Vic Reeves loved him in *Doctor Who* (he even bought his old home when Baker and Sue decided to move to the south of France), and he appeared as the ghost Wyvern in the Reeves and Bob Mortimer remake of *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)*. He dismisses the influence he may have had on Reeves when it came to his casting. “Well, it wasn’t because he wanted my acting. He could have got anybody. it just amused him.”

The made-up world is an escapism he’s always needed. “That’s what *Monarch of the Glen* is and that’s what religion is. Escape. I need to escape the bigotry I was brought up with in Liverpool where Irish Catholics thought they were superior to everyone else. It was terribly common to go into the church and terribly common to fail. I can’t stand formal religion, love graveyards,” he booms. “I like to be rehearsed. I’ve got my tombstone already. Just says ‘Tom Baker 1933’. It doesn’t have a second date yet. There was a gravestone for sale in *Exchange & Mart*, said it would suit a family by the name of Baker…”

Finally, he’s tall-taled me. But he does have a gravestone and, he claims, his coffin. “It’s a good place to keep cat litter. You can buy in bulk. We used to have seven cats. We’ve got four now. Burmese. It’s terrible the grief you feel when you lose a beloved one. I suppose it must be like that with people as well when they die.

“Thank God my wife is 15 years younger, so I’ll die first. I couldn’t exist without my wife. She protects, defends and adores me. I used to only want to be liked. Then I wanted to be loved, and finally, I wanted to be adored and I’ve reached that and that suits me.”

But perhaps trying to kill his mother-in-law

Preparing for battle: Tom gets kitted out for his cover shoot

was not the best way to elicit those feelings from his first wife? “It’s true. I followed her around the garden throwing sharpened hoes at her. She was making me very angry and insulting me and I was in a great state of unhappiness. I chased her. I was amazed how agile she was for a woman of her size. My God. She was as agile as a piglet. I tried to pin her to the barn door. I never wanted to hurt anybody, but she was provocative.

“It’s very difficult to know what one’s emotions were entirely. I was very angry and I’m not often angry. I’m a good-hearted fellow. But if people wound me, I like them to know. Some people are frightened of me… especially directors. Some have died after working with me – some in mysterious circumstances with terrible expressions of horror on their face!”

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▲ En garde! Loch-side outtakes from *RT*’s archives

His own communication skills were sharpened during his childhood. His parents, he says, “didn’t have a conversation for nine years. My father would say to me, ‘Ask her what we’re having for supper,’ and I would say to my mother, who was sat next to him, ‘He wants to know what he’s having for supper,’ and she’d say, ‘What does he want?’ It was very sad. They were very unhappy. My mother was simply a wonderful woman. I can’t say I knew my father, really. He was a merchant sailor and away most of my life.

“My sister, who I talk to occasionally, has become very fond of me – she wasn’t always. I adore my brother, but I don’t see much of him. I don’t come from a close family. Anyway, my sister reminded me of when my mother was dying and my father was dying in another room and I said to my mother, ‘Is there anything you want?’ and she said, ‘I just want to outlive that old goat in the room next door.’ But she didn’t. She died first. And then my father wept the tears of 30 wasted years.”

I BRING UP THE subject of the lost sons. Is it true that in 1997 Baker was in New Zealand and a fan saw him in a restaurant and asked if he could buy his dinner? “Yes. The waiter said, ‘The dinner has been paid for by a fan of yours and he’d like to say hello,’ and I saw this towering, handsome man and I said to him, the way actors do because you don’t like to be disadvantaged, ‘Is your name Morgan?’ He said, ‘No, my name is Piers Baker. I’m your son.’ That was a big surprise. It was an extraordinary coincidence. He’d been working out there as a horticulturalist and he was in a bar having a beer and looked onto the quayside where there was a restaurant. I was sat at the only table he could see properly, and I was sat facing him. He’s been very friendly since. I’ve seen him scores of times and we’ve emailed.”

But how had he failed to recognise his own son? “I’m not too terrific at recognising people. Sometimes I don’t recognise a director and I’ve seen him the day before.”

He divorced his first wife in 1965, when his sons were under five, and saw very little of them in their formative years. Would it have made him happier if he’d been closer to them? “My son Piers writes me very wry emails. He’s also become very friendly with my sister – isn’t that interesting? The other boy, Daniel, is more aloof. Maybe even like I used to be. Piers travels all over the world budding trees and grafting shrubs. He moves wherever the sap is rising. The other son is a builder. I don’t come from a family that sees each other except in a crisis. I left Liverpool in 1950 but I don’t go back much. So no, we’re just not that sort of family.”

And is he happy now?

“I’m as happy as I’m capable of being. I’m not in a state of euphoria but I’m very sure of my situation and sure of the affection of my wife. I don’t have any severe enemies or health problems. I’ve been stroking a cashmere overcoat in the House of Brewer. I think that might be because I’m missing my cats or my wife. I stroke my wife a lot. She has a lovely cashmere skin. I don’t want that kind of contentment to end. Not just yet.”

WHO'S GIRLS

2 SEPTEMBER 1978 Any aspiring *Dr Who* assistant should remember three cardinal rules. Regard the monsters as real, keep your sense of humour and remember to take a hot-water bottle to locations – they're always freezing cold

▲ Elisabeth Sladen photographed at her home. This and the pictures of Louise Jameson and Mary Tamm away from Tardis duties appear to have originally been taken for *RT* features but went unseen until 2023

◀ **ELISABETH SLADEN** became Sarah Jane Smith, the journalist. She says: "I may be biased, but I think my series was the best! There is a very fine line between fantasy and fear, and they got it right in my time. There was a lot of competition for the part when I auditioned and it gave my career a great boost. I have nothing but happy memories of the series – but I certainly wasn't the Doctor's equal. I had to look attractive – and be a sounding-board for his plans."

◀ The Doctor's first non-terrestrial assistant was Leela. **LOUISE JAMESON** loved this part because, she says, she did it how she chose. "All they knew at first was that they wanted someone to be a kind of savage. The rest was up to me. I based Leela on two characters I knew well – Bosie my dog and the little girl upstairs, making a half-child, half-animal. It seemed to work. I did the series for 18 months and am still known as Leela. When kids ask me for my autograph, they say: 'Put your real name in, write Leela.' Though I had to have a lot of make-up to look right for the part, I'm recognised everywhere now."

▶ **MARY TAMM** reckons that as Romana the Time Lady she will be the Doctor's intellectual equal. She says: "I'm supposed to be bright, sophisticated and cool, but as I've only just qualified from the Academy, I have a lot to learn."

Tom Baker has now had to cope with three quite different girl assistants. "You get used to the way of working with one assistant," he says, "and it's always a bit of a worry when a new girl takes over. But all the roles seem to have been successful. I've enjoyed working with both Lis and Louise – as now I'm enjoying working with Mary."

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Elisabeth Sladen returned as Sarah Jane for the revived *Doctor Who* in 2006, before starring in her own spin-off, *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, until her death in 2010. Mary Tamm maintained a busy acting career and died in 2012. Louise Jameson went on to stints in *Tenko*, *Bergerac* and *EastEnders* and today is a regular cast member of *Emmerdale*.

And when love spe
Makes heaven drowsy with t

◀ An old master. Tom Baker framed by photographer Andy Earl

6

16 MARCH 2019

AN ETERNAL CHILDHOOD HERO

Comedian David Walliams quizzes Tom Baker about monks, the macabre, sonic screwdrivers and jelly babies

Thank you very much for inviting me down to Rye for a chat. It's a beautiful place to live – I'm jealous.
Oh yes, it's lovely. Great cemeteries. Very tidy.

That's all you want in a cemetery.
Nothing worse than a messy cemetery. But thank you for coming to Rye. I presume you wanted to talk to me because of my time as the Doctor...

When *Radio Times* asked which childhood hero I would most like to meet, it had to be you. I can remember sitting on the sofa with my dad watching you in *Doctor Who* and being in total awe of you. I thought that you were magic. And that awe has actually never gone. That was why Matt Lucas and I chose you to voice *Little Britain*. We were worried you might not read the nonsense that we wrote, but you had no such qualms.
No, no, I did not.

And you've done such brilliant comedy as well – your episode in *Blackadder II* is one of the funniest half-hours of comedy I have ever seen in my life.
Oh, yes, it was an incredible performance. Some people were amazed I ever worked again. Rowan Atkinson was so anxious – he wasn't very fun to work with. He took me aside the first afternoon of recording and he said: "You know Tom, I'm very experienced in this and the part you're playing here, this sea captain, I think you're actually doing too much. I think he should be as boring as you can make him." So, we then had the final run-through, and I did this boring routine, and the producer came down and said, "What's going on, are you ill?" I said, "No, no, no, I'm just taking in the notes from your boss." And

▲ Tom and David Walliams

he then said, "Tom, he does that every week. He gives those same notes to the visitors every week." Weird, isn't it? A comic genius and yet he has these anxieties.

You've had the most colourful life – I read in your autobiography that you started off as a monk.

Yes, well, becoming a monk in Catholic Liverpool was a way of getting three meals a day. And my mother was a terrible cook. I was about 14 or 15 when I joined but I was very religious all my life. I was also poor and terrible in school, and thought the only way to be extraordinary was through religion. And I really liked being dressed up in a cassock and surplice – I'd always had an impulse to wear women's clothes...

Well, we've all had that – I made a career out of it! It's weird because when I was a kid I also wanted to be a vicar. I saw them addressing people and thought, "That looks like fun. It's like being on the stage."

Oh yes, it was much more dramatic than the humdrum of school or home life. I also gave some of my best performances in confession. I could see the vicar was bored by what I was saying, so I started to make up a few lies. It was a great way of getting attention and as I got older, I kept embellishing my sins until I remember saying to Father Dougan when he asked "Anything else, Thomas?" – "Yes. Murder!" That really got him interested. His hairy ear got right into the grill and he asked, "Murder? How many times?" "Three," I said. He was quite nice about it. "Three murders since last Wednesday?" he asked. There was a pause. "Anyone we know?" And with the genius of a born liar, I said, "No, father. They came from St Teresa's parish down the road." "Oh," he said, "that's all right, then."

▲ Tom making Rowan Atkinson uncomfortable in *Blackadder II* (1986)

Are you religious now?

Oh, no, no.

So, you abandoned the church to become a classically trained actor and joined the National Theatre under Laurence Olivier.

Yes, I think I was the last actor at the National Theatre to put blackface on when I played the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Jonathan Miller. That would have been in the late 60s. I was there until 1970 when Olivier mentioned me to the great Sam Spiegel for a big film called *Nicholas and Alexandra*.

Where you went from being a real monk to playing Rasputin.

That's right! That was a big turning point. It was a success and got a lot of publicity, which is perhaps more important.

So you were a very successful actor in the early 70s. When did you first hear that you were being considered for *Doctor Who*?

I was out of work and labouring on a building site in Pimlico. I used to make the tea...

You were working on a building site? You'd played Rasputin in a major movie, were nominated for two Golden Globes and then found yourself out of work?

That's right. Isn't that incredible? I was on the building site for about seven months when Bill Slater, the head of drama at the BBC, asked me to come and see him. He had the idea I would be a very good Doctor Who.

Had you watched the series?

Oh yes. You couldn't not have watched it – but I didn't ever think I'd like to do it! When I got it, they said, "What are you going to do with it?" I had no idea, which made them a bit anxious. In the end, I was just entirely myself. A man with a sonic screwdriver, who could put a band around a planet, who could dematerialise, who could go backwards and forwards in time – it's what we all do in our imagination all the time, isn't it? Then to be playing it on screen, and doing the double takes, and winking...

I watched your first story, *Robot*, again the other day and it was amazing how you do feel alien in it. That's the thing people often forget about the Doctor: he's in human form but he's not a human. And you captured that brilliantly.

The Doctor comes from somewhere else and I've often felt that I come from somewhere else. I think lots of people feel like that. So it was very easy for me to be utterly preposterous. Because I am preposterous and that's the way I do things. And once the children responded to me, I was completely shattered with joy. The Doctor liberated me in a way. And the more I told silly stories or did double takes or rolled my eyes – it was quite shameless – the more children enjoyed it. They liked that grotesqueness. And I'm also grotesque, so there you are. I had it all: grotesque, shameless and ambitious.

▲ Tom rehearsing his *Doctor Who* debut *Robot* (1974) alongside Michael Kilgarriff in partial costume

I was at university with Simon Pegg. He met you when he was a kid – you must have been signing annuals or something – and he remembers it exactly even though he was only eight years old. He told me he was walking away from the table and you gave him a jelly baby, and then he came back and said, "I've got an action man of you." And you went, "Have another jelly baby."

Yes, I would have done! The jelly babies, of course, were a wonderful piece of childishness. I remember a chap at one of those conventions saying to me, "You gave me a jelly baby when I was eight years old and I've still got it." I fell about with laughter. And then he pulled out a little box and opened it up. And sure enough, inside was this hideous lump of gelatine with my initials on it, where I'd apparently signed it! I didn't recognise the writing, but I realised I was in the presence of a very benevolent lunatic.

Why did you decide to leave the series? Was that hard?

It was. I must've been deeply in love with someone at the time. I was always in love with somebody. And she...

"IT WAS VERY EASY FOR ME TO BE UTTERLY PREPOSTEROUS BECAUSE I AM PREPOSTEROUS"

You did it for love?

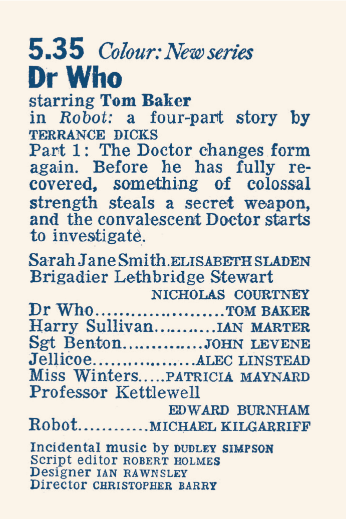
Well, yes... I've never been very rational.

That surprises me... But you couldn't have stayed for ever. Was it hard letting go of the part?

I can't. It never left me. I've been playing Doctor Who ever since. When I was in *Educating Rita* years ago, I played Frank the same way I played Doctor Who. It was because of *Doctor Who* that fans were piling in to see me. I couldn't exactly produce a sonic screwdriver in *Educating Rita*, but I did the double takes and was very over the top. Fortunately, the actress, Kate Fitzgerald, didn't mind my idiocy at all.

I read this incredible "day in the life" piece you did with *The Sunday Times* in 1981, which was an extraordinary insight into your life at the time. You were friends with Francis Bacon...

Yes, Bacon and Auberon Waugh, Jeffrey Bernard, they were recklessly enjoying life. And they were fun to be with. Francis was often



5.35 *Colour: New series*

Dr Who

starring **Tom Baker**
in *Robot:* a four-part story by TERRANCE DICKS

Part 1: The Doctor changes form again. Before he has fully recovered, something of colossal strength steals a secret weapon, and the convalescent Doctor starts to investigate.

Sarah Jane Smith.ELISABETH SLADEN
Brigadier Lethbridge Stewart NICHOLAS COURTNEY
Dr Who......................TOM BAKER
Harry Sullivan..........IAN MARTER
Sgt Benton.............JOHN LEVENE
Jellicoe.................ALEC LINSTEAD
Miss Winters.....PATRICIA MAYNARD
Professor Kettlewell EDWARD BURNHAM
Robot...........MICHAEL KILGARRIFF

Incidental music by DUDLEY SIMPSON
Script editor ROBERT HOLMES
Designer IAN RAWNSLEY
Director CHRISTOPHER BARRY

▲ Tom bringing shining light to 1979's *The Creature from the Pit*

absent but mysteriously, after a few weeks, someone would come in and say, "Francis is in town." And we'd wait and he would appear, very proper, except for that strange way of talking.

Was he flirty?
Oh yes, he was very flirty! It was a crazy time. I was doing lots of voiceovers, in between some of these plays, which supplied the ammunition to go to clubs and be frivolous with money. I was making a lot of money. No idea how much. I just assumed it would never stop.

Those voiceovers are the reason Matt Lucas and I thought of you when we were making a radio series of *Little Britain*. Of course, we were fans, but we also knew you had an amazing and instantly recognisable voice. And we figured that you didn't take yourself too seriously!
I played it straight. Well, as straight as I can.

Did you ever actually watch it?
I didn't really watch it, no. But I enjoyed getting paid for it. And seeing the effect it had. I remember children saying, "That's the man from *Doctor Who* who does the voice of *Little Britain*." And they'd start skipping about being the only gay in the village. It was terribly sweet. But I never saw it. Do you watch yourself?

Watching yourself is tricky, because either you're alone in your house, watching yourself on television, therefore you're bonkers. Earlier this year you released *Scratchman*, the novel of a *Doctor Who* screenplay that you wrote in the 1970s, which we'd only heard of in legend...
Yes, people used to ask me about it and I didn't really know where it was. Then I finally traced the manuscript and Patrick, the head of publications at the BBC, revived it as a novel.

That's great! It's a first because it's a *Doctor Who* novel by an actor who played Doctor Who.
Is it? I'm quite pleased with some of the horror of it. I have written a book before about a cruel boy who kicked pigs...

People like the macabre. I really enjoyed the book.
I am notorious for my bad taste. And it's been a blessing really. Perhaps not for other people.

Was there ever a time when you fell out of love with the Doctor?
No, I've always celebrated it. And I hope it will never go away. Sometimes when I'm getting my paper in the morning, a plumber on his way to work, who's about 45, does a double take and will say, "Hey, are you Tom Baker?" And for a split second I see him become a child again at the sight of me. And he'll say, "You were just great." And tap my shoulder. Those little taps are so eloquent. And it's wonderful. I can't complain about that happening to an old man.

Do you still do *Doctor Who* conventions?
Not many. I find them long and arduous and I get very tired now. I do the big one at Olympia where they come from all over the world. They come to worship all things *Doctor Who* and I lay my hands on them, and they feel better.

So, you may not have become a monk but you definitely found your calling!

▼ Tom in studio in 1975 with Ian Marter, who played companion Harry Sullivan. The pair later wrote the unmade screenplay *Doctor Who Meets Scratchman*

TOM BAKER: WHAT I'M WATCHING

17 JUNE 2006

I LIVE IN THE south of France now, but all the Brits over here are set up to get the TV from home. There's not much else to do in this very quiet little village except listen to the bark of a lonely labrador, so I find myself watching an awful lot of television. In the early evening, when I'm trimming the radishes or pressing the garlic, I'll watch the news. It's like watching *Mr & Mrs*. A man with an orange face and a woman with luscious lips standing around looking uncomfortable. Why are all the newsreaders standing up these days? They've probably all got haemorrhoids! I can never remember a damn thing they say, because I'm too busy watching the woman's luscious lips. I can't tell you what I'm thinking, but if I were a Roman Catholic, it would be called a mortal sin!

Sometimes, it's nice to sit down in front of *Corrie*. Don't you think I'd make a wonderful character? Maybe I could live in a room above the Rovers and all the mature ladies would pop up to see me. Nothing lecherous, of course. They'd just enjoy my company because I'm a good listener.

Later, when I'm scouring the pans and ironing the elaborate pillowcases, I might catch a bit of that *Big Brother* programme. I can't understand why everyone is so snidey about the poor people on there. They're just young men and women who want to be famous. I wanted to be famous when I was young. Life is so f*****g boring, that being famous is the only option that most people have.

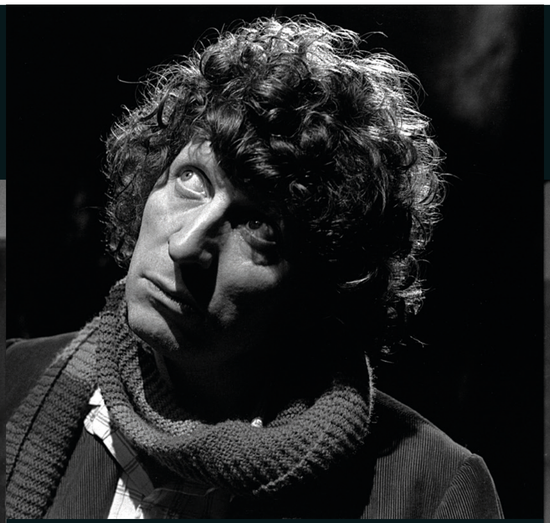
I did watch a little bit of the new *Doctor Who* and I think the new fella, Tennant, is excellent. Isn't it wonderful they're getting eight million viewers? My only disappointment is that they didn't ask me back. I would have liked to play the Master. You see, the Master and the Doctor are like Holmes and Moriarty: two sides of the same man. That would turn a few heads, wouldn't it?

AS TOLD TO **DANNY SCOTT**

LIFE IN STUDIO

Rare glimpses of *Doctor Who* being recorded at BBC Television Centre

▼ Tom Baker rehearses *Robot* (1974). All these shots were taken by *RT* staff photographer Don Smith



▲ Tom Baker, Elisabeth Sladen as Sarah Jane Smith and guest star Wendy Williams confront an insect Wirrn in *The Ark in Space* (1975)

▲ Dalek creator Davros (Michael Wisher) is readied for the cameras in *Genesis of the Daleks* (1975)

▶ The Doctor under interrogation by Styggron (Martin Friend) in *The Android Invasion* (1975)

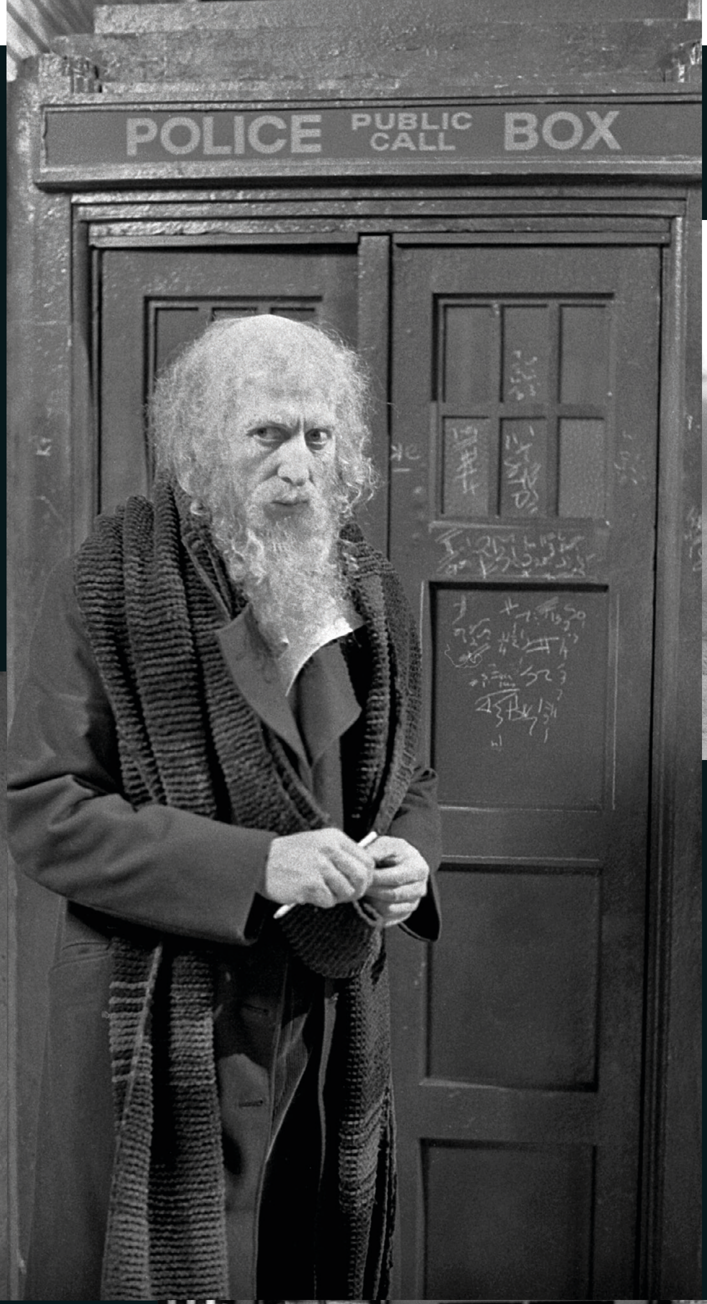
▲ Elisabeth Sladen in high spirits during *Planet of Evil* (1975)

◀ Kneeling before the mighty Sutekh (Gabriel Woolf) in *Pyramids of Mars* (1975). The villain returned in 2024 for a rematch with Ncuti Gatwa's Doctor

▶ The Doctor makes a proclamation, alongside guest actor Simon Lack, in *The Androids of Tara* (1978)

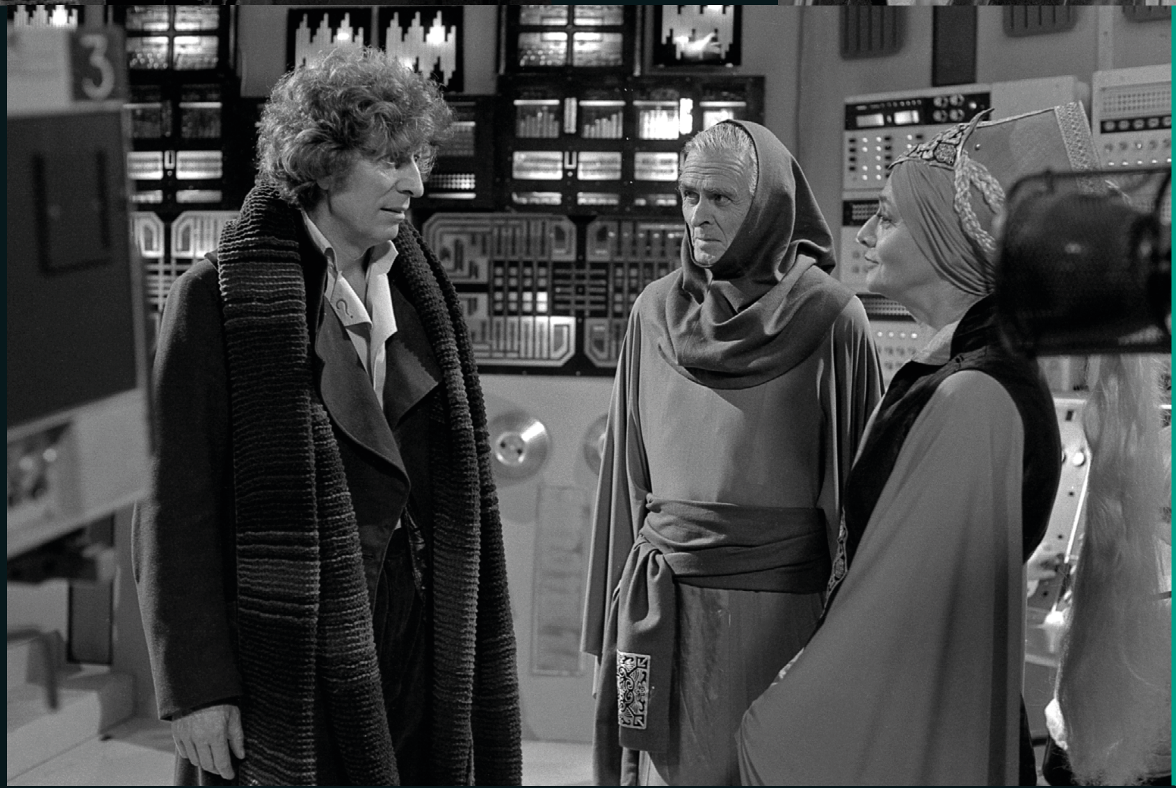
▲ Tom with guest star Beatrix Lehmann in *The Stones of Blood* (1978)

▲ Behind bars with Mary Tamm as Romana in *The Armageddon Factor* (1979)



▲ An aged Doctor with Lalla Ward as Romana in *The Leisure Hive* (1980)

▶ Original *Doctor Who* cast member Jacqueline Hill, who had played Barbara in the 1960s, returned as a new character in *Meglos* (1980). And (below) with guest actor Edward Underdown



POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX

◀ A trip to the dawn of humankind with Lalla Ward as Romana and guest actor Tom Chadbon in *City of Death* (1979)

7

25 NOVEMBER 2023

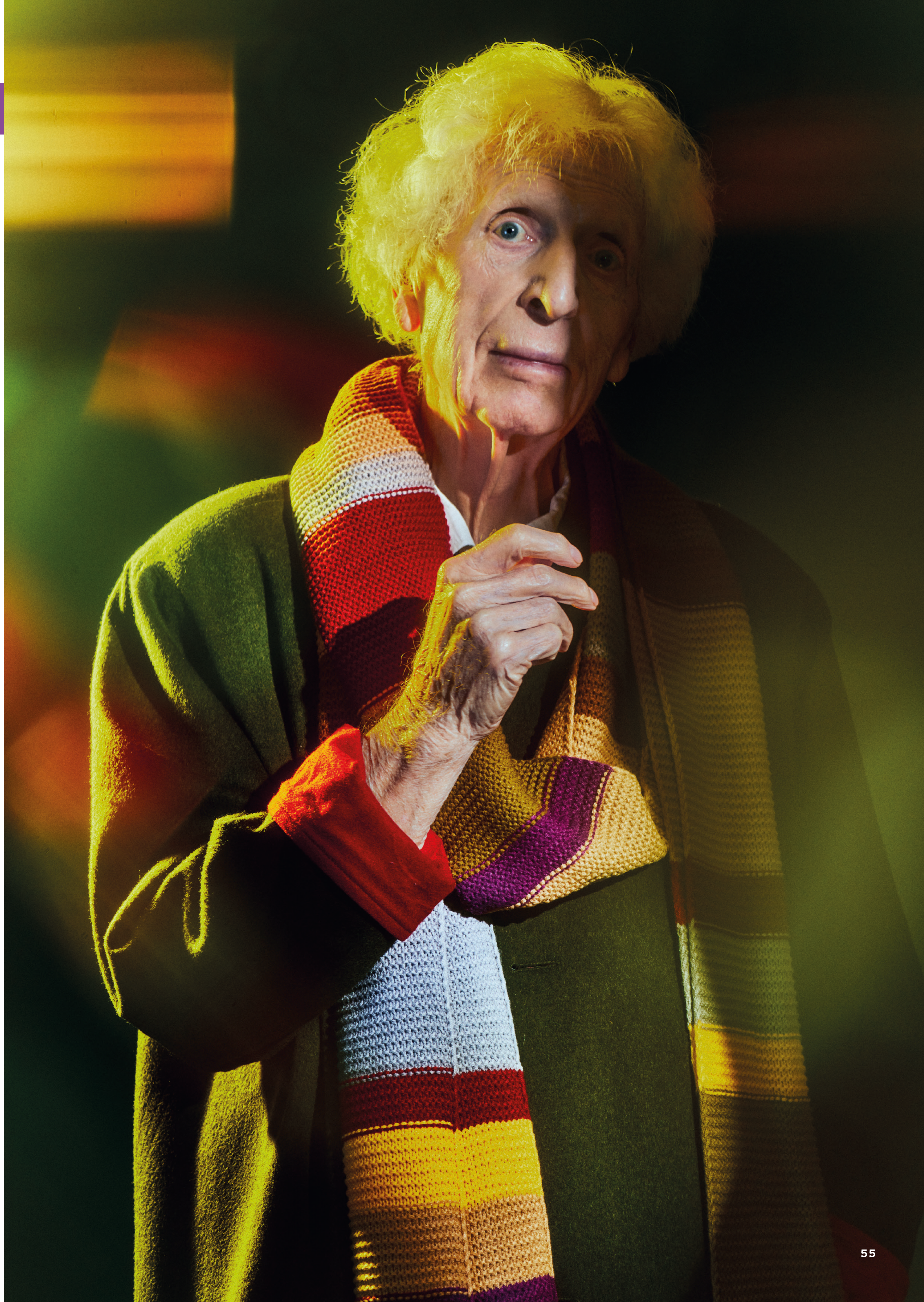
'I'M MILDLY CONTEMPTUOUS OF OTHER DOCTORS'

He was the longest-serving Time Lord, whose era haunts those who follow. But what does Tom Baker think of *Doctor Who* today? Interview by Matthew Sweet

Tom Baker's eyes are wide. Tom Baker's eyes are often wide. "Oh!" he exclaims, gazing at my phone, reading glasses perched on his nose. "Is this the next *Doctor Who*?" He takes in his first sight of his successor. Ncuti Gatwa in navy pinstripe… in an orange jumper and butterscotch tartan coat… in frills and britches. "A handsome young man!" he whistles. "Marvellous cheekbones. These things are important as you get near to death."

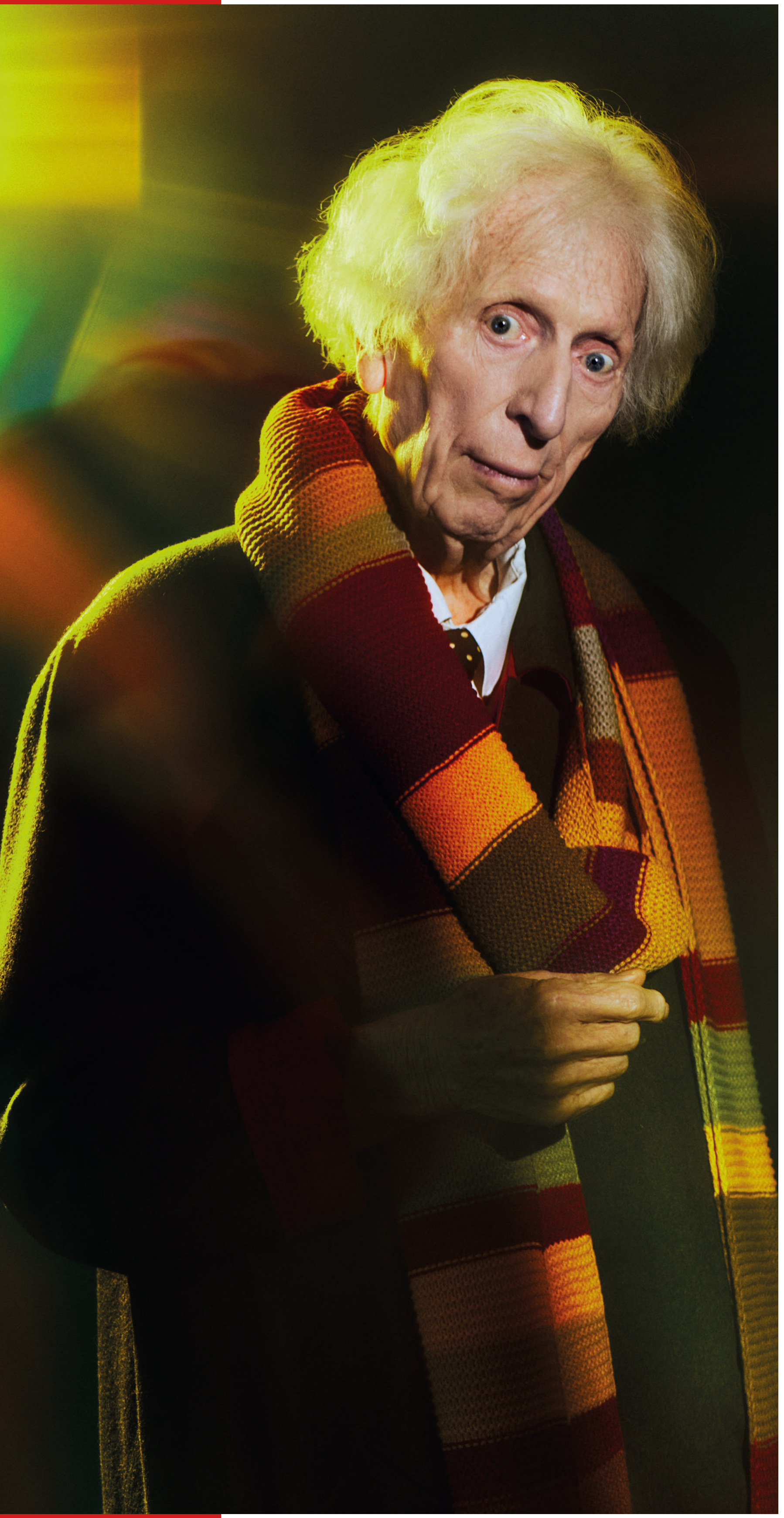
Baker is approaching 90, though he has been giving oblivion a cheerful wave since the last years of the 20th century, when he acquired the tombstone that waits for him, gathering lichen, in the churchyard of Boughton Malherbe in Kent. Between the ages of 19 and 21 he was a monk in a Catholic brotherhood – now, old age has given him the appearance of a medieval saint: long bones beneath a halo of white hair. He keeps satsumas in his coat pockets and distributes them like indulgences. Much of his conversation seems to come from a cloud of playful unknowing, as if he were floating between this world and the next, and you were his only conduit to reality.

"The 60th anniversary?" he muses, apparently unaware that *Doctor Who* has reached this landmark, despite agreeing to our interview and photoshoot to celebrate it. "And is it still a huge success?" Yes. "Will they show all the old stuff, too?" Oh yes, on iPlayer, all the time. "Nobody failed as *Doctor Who* did they?" There's now a mischievous glint in his eye. "Well, we mustn't be ungenerous to anyone. But certainly *I* didn't."



▶ Tom Baker photographed by Yoshitaka Kono to celebrate 60 years of *Doctor Who*

“NOBODY FAILED AS DOCTOR WHO, DID THEY? BUT CERTAINLY *I* DIDN’T”



He didn’t. Tom Baker holds the record for the longest tenure in the Tardis (seven years, 1974–81) and the show’s highest ratings (13.6 million if you discount episodes aired during ITV strikes). Under him, *Doctor Who* received a triumphant American launch, gained its own magazine (still running) and established imagery that has stuck in the public imagination (when the Doctor appears on *The Simpsons*, it’s in Baker’s hat and scarf).

His era also haunts the present relaunch: the diamond-shaped logo is back, while David Tennant’s first special – *The Star Beast* – is an adaptation of a 1980 comic strip written for Baker’s Doctor.

Is there anything he thinks Ncuti Gatwa should know? “Knowing anything is a bit dangerous when you play Doctor Who,” he says. “It’s better to know nothing. And to be good-natured. The trick is to respond generously to other actors, which halves your task because you don’t have to be driving it all the time.”

A 60th-anniversary reunion with his fellow Doctors is not on the cards. “I avoid them, you know. Not with any malice. A degree of contempt, perhaps. But mildly. Mildly contemptuous.”

I mention that the old Tarzans – Ron Ely, Buster Crabbe, Johnny Weissmuller – would often lunch together to speak of those things that only Tarzans know. Baker snorts in horror at the idea of a *Doctor Who* equivalent. “Unthinkable! Fancy being round a table with old Doctor Whos! Though I’d quite like to walk into a restaurant and find 12 of them around the table – I’d enjoy doing that double take, as I desperately tried to remember who they were. I could keep that going for hours. Oh! I can feel the malice rising.”

BAKER HAS USUALLY preferred to stand apart from the other Doctors. In 1983, he rejected the opportunity to return for the 20th-anniversary special, *The Five Doctors*. For years he declined to appear at conventions with the other actors who have played the role. “Inevitably comparisons are made,” he says, “and I find them odious.”

This history is why many fans found his cameo in the 50th-anniversary special *The Day of the Doctor* in 2013 such an overwhelming experience. I saw it in an audience of 3,000 fans. When Baker appeared, the man beside me fell prostrate to the floor in a kind of religious awe.

Baker doesn’t remember *Doctor Who*’s debut in 1963. Nor hearing the news of the Kennedy assassination the previous day. That period wasn’t the happiest in his life. He’d left his drama school, Rose Bruford, without finishing the course. “I think I made a girl pregnant,” he muses, as though his biographical headlines were the details of a part he once played. “They disapproved of impregnating girls. In those days you had to do the decent thing.” His first wife’s family, a dynasty of Nottinghamshire rose-cultivators, didn’t welcome him. “I became a minor member of the girl’s family and had to put up with being treated offhandedly because I’d spoiled their daughter.”

They had two sons, from whom Baker says he’s more or less estranged today. “I very rarely see my children. They’re middle-aged men now. I don’t know what their ages are. I’m coming up to 90 so the boys must be 60.”

And despite Baker becoming, in his own words, “quite skilful at selling roses”, the marriage didn’t last. “I never see her now, you know.” He looks at me beadily. “You don’t seem at all surprised.”

HIS TIME ON *Doctor Who* now seems to him a golden period – the product of some alchemical reaction between his personality and the part. He could knock on doors on a Saturday teatime and be assured a place on the sofa of an amazed family. Parents of sick children would appeal for his help. One family summoned him to hospital to raise their son from a coma. “I tried to be very modest and hide the fact that it gave me a certain degree of real pleasure,” he says. “Of power. It’s nothing I’m proud of, but there we are. It’s nice to feel powerful.”

Other Saturdays he spent in the Colony Room Club, the boozy epicentre of Bohemian Soho, where the painter Francis Bacon would gaze, baffled, at *Doctor Who* playing on the TV above the bar. “He didn’t really understand why everyone was excited by it. He thought it was very odd.” He was excited by Baker, though. “Francis was very flirtatious. He would get closer and closer and say, ‘Mmm? Mmm?’ as if he were absolutely electrified.”

It couldn’t last for ever. Baker’s post-*Who* career has had its ups and downs. But for many, for all time, Baker is the Doctor – and he knows it. So perhaps it’s no surprise that in recent years his *Five Doctors*-era reluctance has thawed, allowing him to return for the 50th anniversary, release a *Who* novel and record new plays as the Doctor for audio production company Big Finish.

We look at some photographs of a party held for *Doctor Who*’s 15th anniversary, which, for a reason he cannot fathom, he attended dressed as Oscar Wilde. “Wilde had a large influence on me,” he reflects. “He was a very sad sort of fellow, but he was funny and he was adored. I was very keen on being adored. Still am, really.”

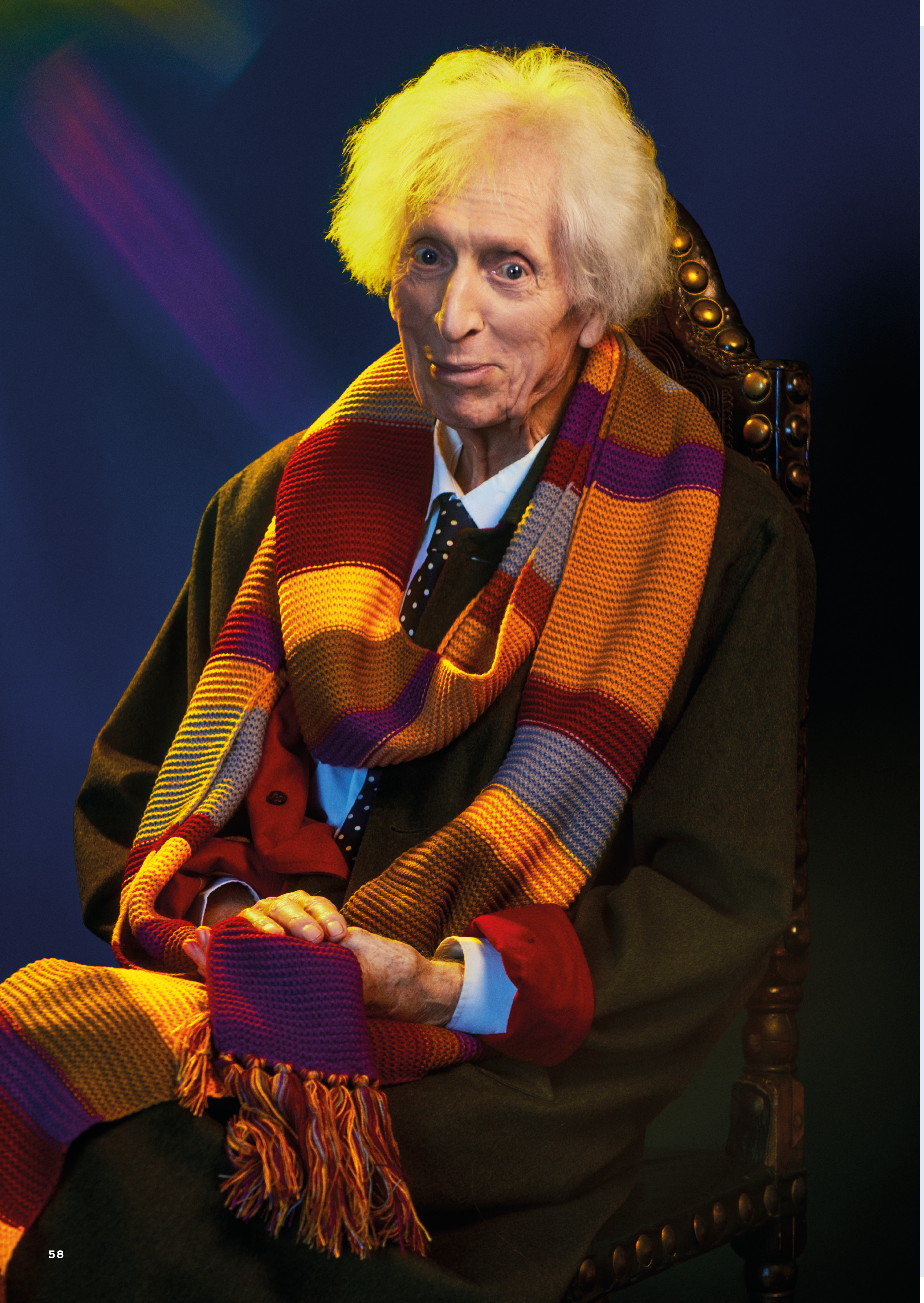
And, Baker concedes, he has pursued his own form of Wildean self-construction. It’s visible on screen, when he plays the Doctor. It shapes his interactions with fans, in whom he stirs memories of ancient childhood pleasures and securities. It’s in our conversation, too, in which he mixes warm reminiscence with admissions that might chill those unfamiliar with his manner. “I’ve found this performance, which I’ve done non-stop ever since,” he says. “People like that harmless, occasionally disturbing quality, which is natural to me, because I’m not really certain about anything. I’ve discovered a way of giving an impression that I’m trying to hide something. It’s been very successful so far.”

▲ An infinite landscape on a BBC budget for 1979’s *City of Death*, Tom’s most-watched *Doctor Who* story

He gets up to have his photograph taken. He needs little persuading to wrap up in a replica of his *Doctor Who* scarf. Perhaps it comforts him as much as it comforts me. Something of the power of the Doctor, he suspects, remains with him.

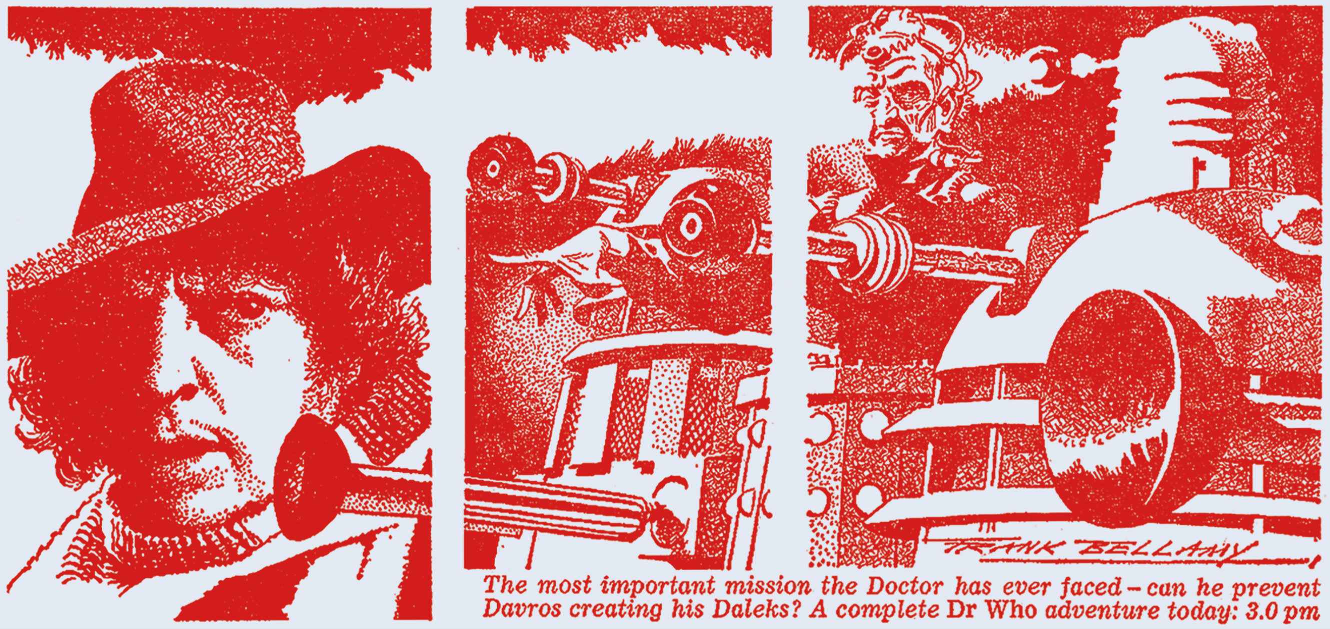
“Though after all this time,” he says, “it’s quite hard to go on believing it.”

As the camera clicks away, he mutters quietly under his breath; holds his fingers in a priestlike manner. It looks like a gesture of absolution. Disbelief seems very far away.



WHAT THE READERS SAID

Baker-era brickbats and bouquets from the *RT* Letters pages


FRANK BELLAMY
The most important mission the Doctor has ever faced – can he prevent Davros creating his Daleks? A complete Dr Who adventure today: 3.0 pm

1975

FANTASY V REALITY

Dr Who was once a fantasy adventure serial for children. Not any more though; in today's episode we saw the Doctor and his friends, lost in a corpse-strewn minefield, wrenching gas masks from the faces of dead soldiers in order to survive an attack by poison gas themselves... and finally pursued through a foggy, nightmarish landscape by the repulsive results of "failed experiments in human genetics".

It was brutal, violent and revolting – totally without point or plot – yet convincing enough... to be terrifying for many normal children, and to put some very nasty ideas into the heads of some of the growing number of disturbed ones.

Does the producer of this unpleasant effort really expect a not-too-bright child to know the difference between grim reality on the Falls Road or in Cambodia, and a jolly little Saturday romp with the Doctor?

Alison Duddington
London, N10

Philip Hinchcliffe, Producer, *Dr Who*, replies: Though I am sure that most of our audience realise they are watching fiction not fact, of course, ultimately, we have to rely upon parents in the home to decide whether a programme is suitable for their child. We do take great pains to ensure that we never depict any act of violence which could be dangerously copied by children. The episode to which Ms Duddington refers was the first of a six-part story, *Genesis of the Daleks*, which, in fact, will be seen to adopt a clearly moral attitude towards senseless warfare.

▲ The "brutal, violent and revolting" *Genesis of the Daleks*, illustrated by Frank Bellamy

1976

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I am beginning to believe we have been conned, and that Dr Who and his seemingly Earth-born companions have been androids all along. They never seem to need to eat, or to go to sleep, or to wash or comb their hair, or to perform any of the small functions of daily living so necessary to us real human beings.

And all those human-looking forms of life on other planets: do they never have regular meals, and babies, and schools, and sewage systems? And what energises a Dalek? Do they need food or sleep? Do Daleks go to the loo? A few more details about their private lives would make an interesting change from the now rather boring pursuits through underground passages, with Dr Who and his companions forever being trapped by sliding doors and flashing lights.

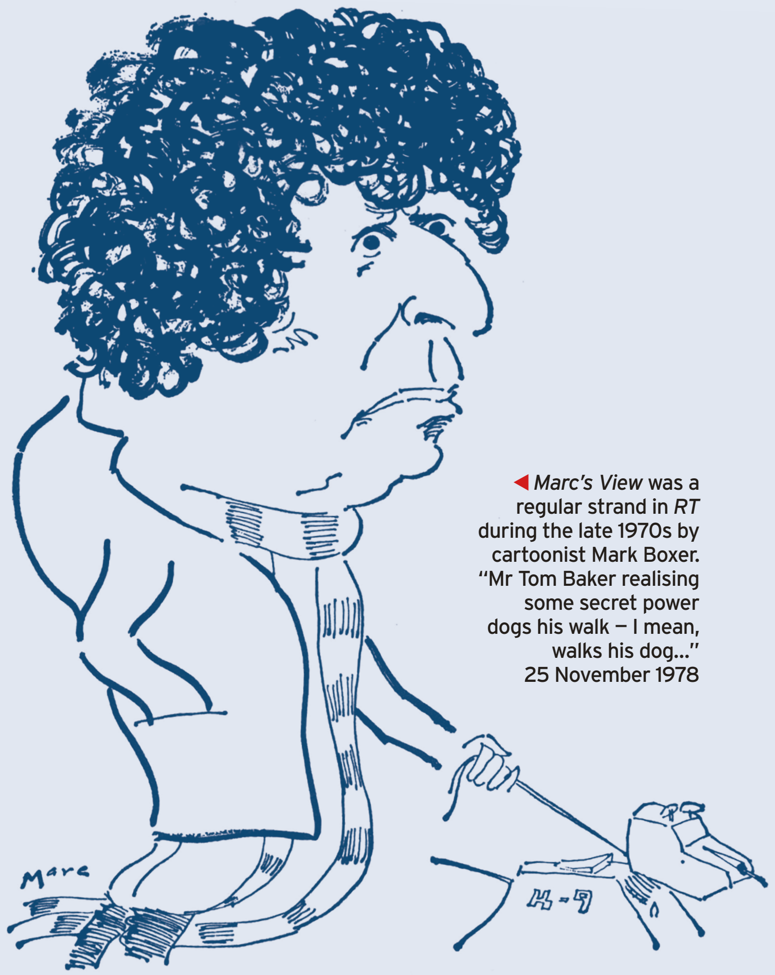
(Mrs) **Margaret Duggan**
Winchester

1977

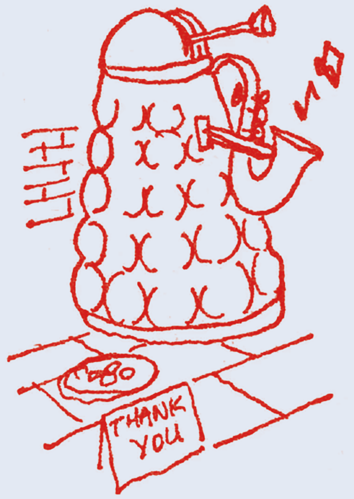
BRING BACK THE MONSTERS!

I am writing to tell you about my opinion of the present series of *Dr Who*. I am not saying that it is no good any more but I would like to see more monsters in it! When I think of all the monsters (Daleks, Sea Devils, Yetis, etc.) I feel quite disappointed in what we see now. The only time my brothers and I are tempted to hide behind the couch now is when the spaceship is about to blow up or, very rarely, when a murder is about to be committed.

Amy Sheeler (aged 11)
Winchester, Hampshire



Marc's View was a regular strand in *RT* during the late 1970s by cartoonist Mark Boxer. "Mr Tom Baker realising some secret power dogs his walk – I mean, walks his dog..." 25 November 1978



NIGEL PAIGE

Graham Williams, Producer, *Dr Who*, replies: Thank you, Amy, for letting us know how much you enjoyed the programme. Unfortunately, the problem with monsters is that once you've seen the first hundred or so you've seen them all! Well, not quite all – we still have a few up our sleeves for the future. I hope you will find them just as exciting as the other moments you mention, but monsters just on their own can be pretty boring; a good *Dr Who* story – never.

1980

THE DOCTOR'S LOCKS

Being an avid follower of *Dr Who*, I am most interested in being informed of how Dr Who gets away without getting his hair cut. Never once has this been mentioned, but the Doctor's hair is always of uniform length.

Leigh Francis Harvey
Storrington, Sussex

Graham Williams, Producer, *Dr Who*, replies: After roughly 750 years, Gallifreyan barbers must be used to this particular Time Lord's hair style. They seem to have coped with the problem admirably, having received instruction from the earth-bound BBC make-up department.

A NEW PRESCRIPTION

Congratulations – the BBC have finally modernised *Doctor Who* to the standard we should expect with today's musical and visual effects available. Not only the title music but the music throughout the programme was very entertaining and the visual effects have at last matched those used in *Blake's 7*. I couldn't help feeling that the last series lacked any special effects and am surprised to see the large change...

It's paid off, though. Well done!

Timothy Warner
Newton Abbot, Devon

As a member of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society, I feel I must congratulate [producer] John-Nathan Turner and the BBC on the new series. The new graphics and theme music are nothing short of brilliant. These seem to have given the series the lift I felt it needed.

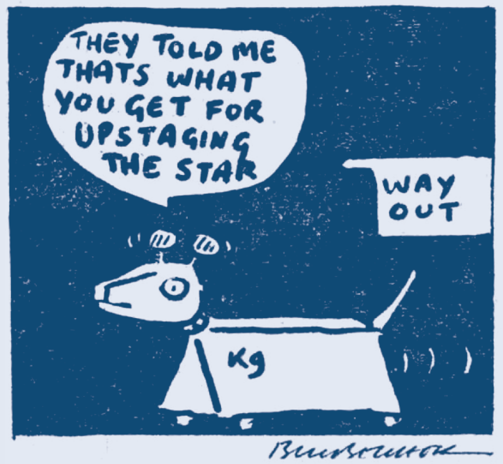
The only complaint I have is the blowing up of K9 in the first episode. Why can't they just leave it in the Tardis for once instead of blowing it up, or laryngitis or corrosion in its circuits? I do think it is used in the series too much, but I hope it is not written out altogether.

T Phillipps
Spalding, Lincolnshire

THE DESCENT OF K9

Will K9 be sent to Battersea Dogs' Home when he retires from *Doctor Who*? If not, I am quite willing to adopt him. That is, if he's not frightened of our cat.

Jane Ching
Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire


THEY TOLD ME THATS WHAT YOU GET FOR UPSTAGING THE STAR
WAY OUT
K9

A number of viewers have written bewailing the departure of K9 from Doctor Who. *In fact he will not leave until the beginning of 1981, and will then go on permanent display in one of the* Doctor Who *exhibitions, at Longleat House, Wiltshire, and Blackpool.*

1981

A FITTING FAREWELL

It is not often that I feel the need to write and congratulate anybody; but having viewed the 21 February edition of *Doctor Who*, I feel that it is necessary. Not only did it have all the essence of the traditional *Doctor Who* but it stirred me by the timely return of the most notorious of enemies, the Master.

Not since the middle days of Jon Pertwee's reign as Dr Who has he appeared, and now that he has done, it makes me remember all those little landmarks in the series.

So, with a suitably stirring exit from a programme in a series that is going to herald the arrival of the fifth Dr Who since the early 60s, is it possible that the Master will return to settle his old scores, and possibly appear on Earth?

Neil G King
Bungay, Suffolk

Episode one of the new *Doctor Who* story, *Logopolis*, outclasses any story made since Jon Pertwee left in 1974. How ironic that Tom Baker's last story should be the best he's ever made. [Script editor] Christopher Bidmead and John Nathan-Turner have achieved a miracle I thought could never be done: making me like Tom Baker as much as I admired Jon Pertwee.

Stephen Poppitt
Huntingdon

THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT
by BEATRIX POTTER

▲ The Doctor and K9 catch up with some reading in *The Creature from the Pit* (1979)

◀ A touch of Goth for the Doctor in *The Ribos Operation* (1978)

RadioTimes

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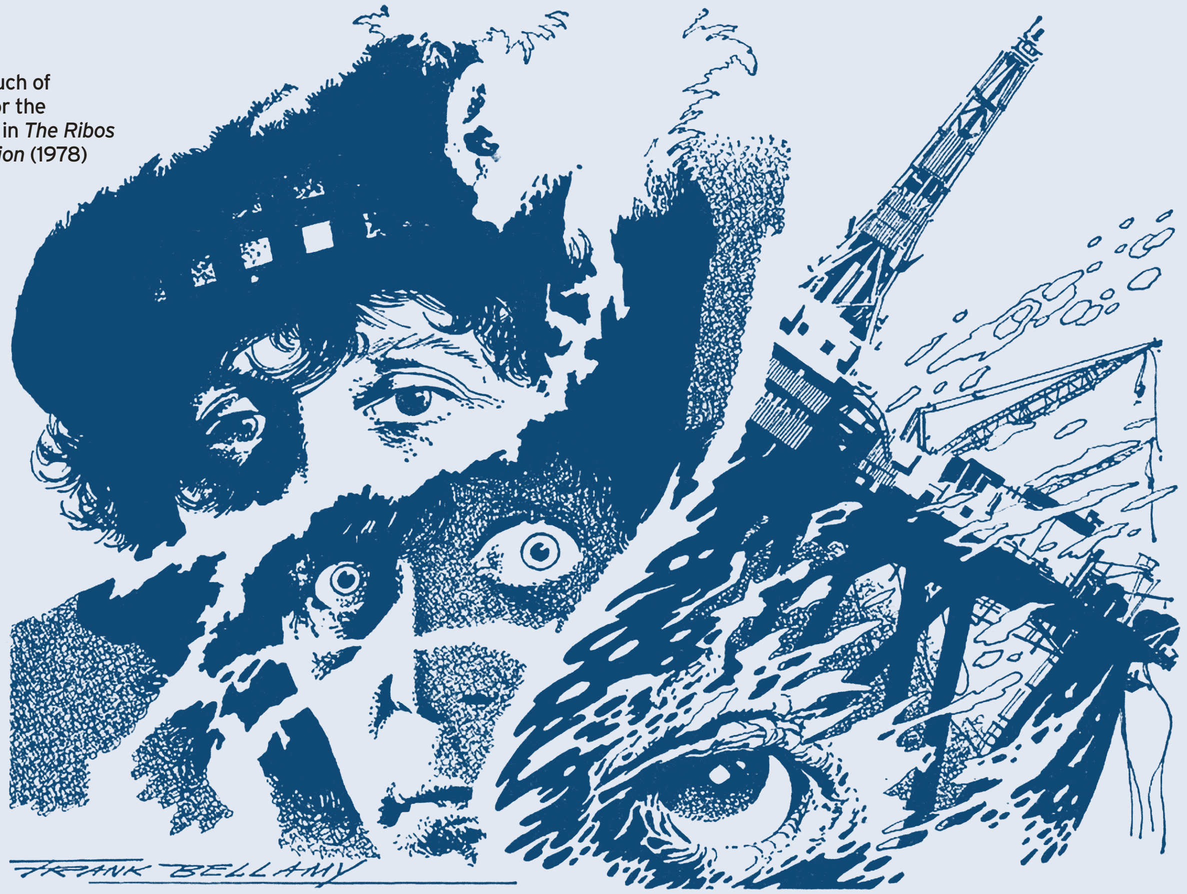

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TOM BAKER ◆ 2003

RadioTimes